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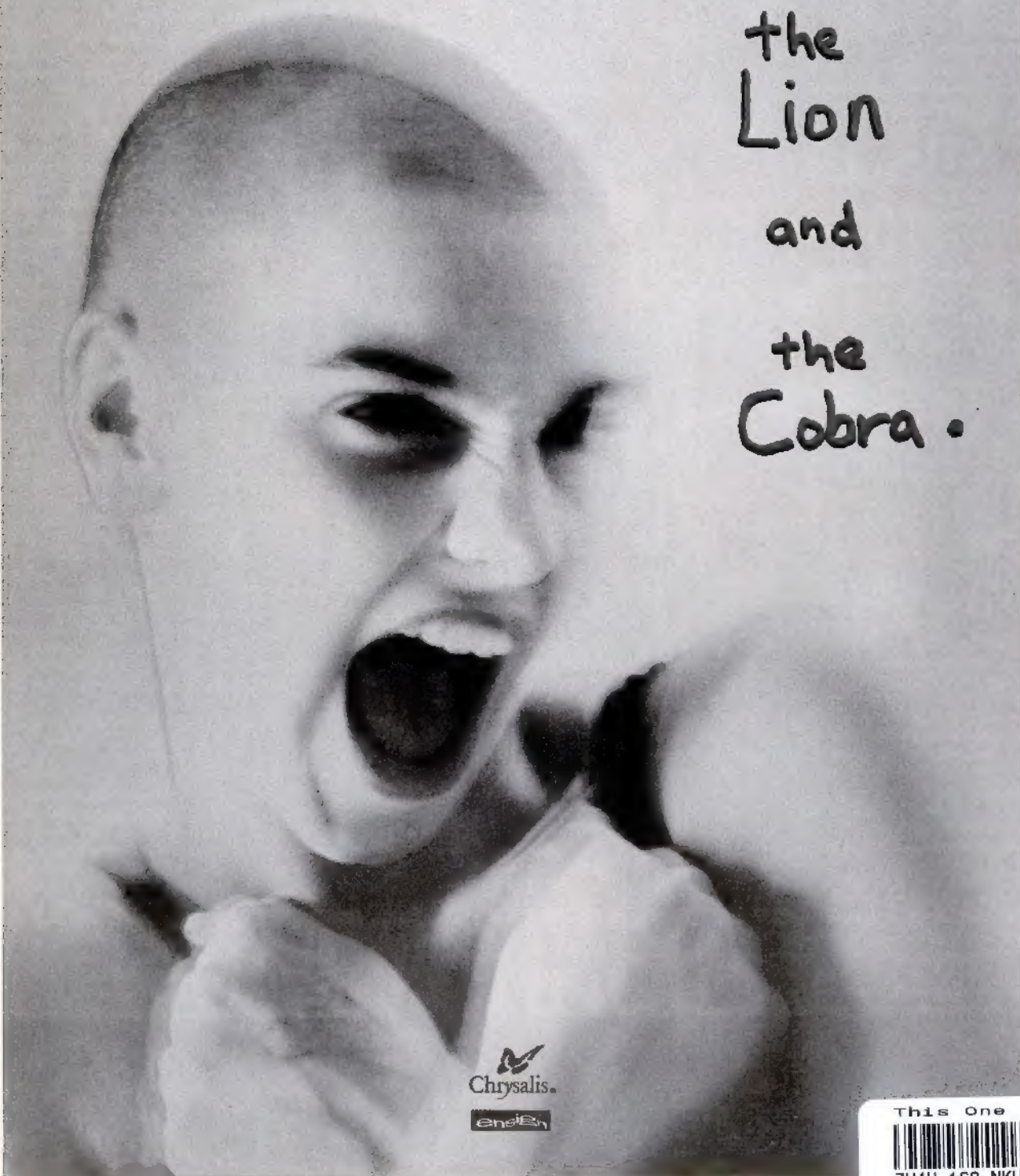
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Volume Three Number Eight

January 1988

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From Bernie Goetz to Donald Trump, New Yorkers all follow the same endearing, pathetic patterns. By Glenn O'Brien. 74

TOP SPIN

The word's suppression gives it the power, the violence, the viciousness. If President Kennedy got on television and said: 'Tonight, I'd like to introduce the niggers in my cabinet' and he yelled 'nigger nigger nigger nigger nigger nigger' at every nigger he saw, 'boogey boogey boogey boogey nigger nigger nigger' till nigger didn't mean anything anymore, till nigger lost its meaning—you'd never make any four year old nigger cry when he came home from school.

—Lenny Bruce

It's not just the word nigger that we have to banish by not being afraid to hear or even say it, it's the idea we have to exorcise by not being afraid to face it.

By now, Jesse Jackson has survived the word, but not escaped the indictment. He is stuck in the quicksand of not only the country's tangible bigotry, but the country's greater assumption that bigotry will prevent him from getting nominated. Everyone feels that everyone feels America isn't ready for a black President. So the man who is fast emerging as the best candidate is standing right in front of us and we stare past him, looking at the bleak horizon for a leader.

Which is not to say Jesse Jackson would make the ideal President, but he is the best bet so far. He may be an anathema for the political machine, but then that may be exactly what's needed. As it stands now, if next November we have to choose between George Bush and Paul Simon, it may very well be on the basis of who wins the swimsuit competition.

Jackson is strong on the issues—very strong. Sometimes he is bombastic and he seems to have borrowed the vocal delivery of his former mentor and leader Martin Luther King, Jr. Sometimes he stretches sincerity: at a recent speech at St. Anselm College he announced he was going to the Persian Gulf to tell the U.S. forces that "we love them." He would have sounded a little more real if he had said he was going to Minnesota to tell the Twins we love them. On the other hand, he's going to the Gulf, and he went to Syria and brought back that captured Marine pilot, and he's going to

Ethiopia, and he's been knee deep in cowshit on our farms and . . . he's going and doing and has intelligent things to say, and intelligent solutions to offer on most of the issues. One gets the sense that Jackson is in motion, operative. That if he was a gift under the Christmas tree, he came with the batteries already included.

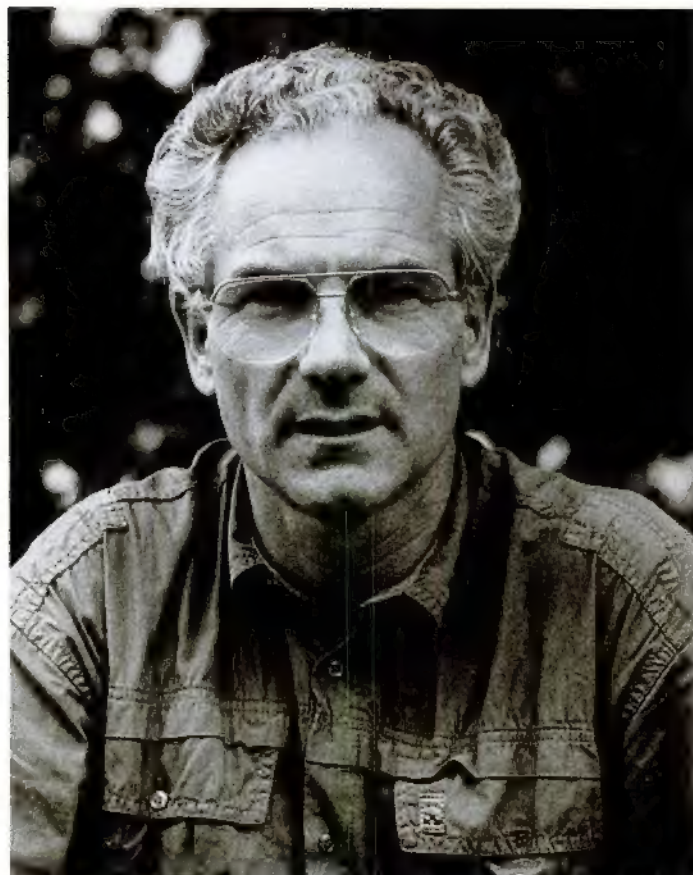
He has said some tactless and stupid or unworkable things too, but, in the visible deterioration of American politics to style over substance, it should be realized that Jackson has more substance than style.

A year ago it seemed as if the Democrats would have the White House handed to them in '88. Potential candidates raced past Jackson to be first in line for helpings of party favor that would lead to nomination. Jackson was hardly thought about. The Democrats were so confident that the public wanted to be rid of Reagan that they seemed to forget about, or felt they could shortcut the need for, strong qualifications. Now the party has shot itself in the foot so many times, the house lights have come on and the public are seeing a bunch of candidates who looked better before.

What's really embarrassing and unsettling the Democrats is that the candidate who stands out is Jesse. They content themselves that it's because he's an enigma, not the best candidate. That's almost accurate: the enigma is that he's the best candidate, if only in comparison to them.

In *U.S. News and World Report's* recent cover story on him, Jackson said "America is more colorblind than it was four years ago. Now, finally I can be scrutinized like the others. I can be judged for the content of my character rather than the color of my skin." He isn't kidding anyone with that remark, including himself. Unfortunately, more than wishful thinking, it's hopeful propaganda.

U.S. News certainly wasn't colorblind. The article was written in a tone of curious disbelief, as if the author had just discovered that a black man was seriously running for President. It noted that Bill Cosby's TV character acts as an "unofficial advance man for the Jackson campaign, helping to soften white attitudes about blacks." As if picking at a scab, the article dug at Jackson's



Dr. Peter Duesberg, whose research indicates that the HIV virus may not be the cause of AIDS (p. 43).

political faux pas and undeniable ambition, and, in the only paragraph that dealt with current issues, it loosely dissected a couple of Jackson's "crowd pleasing bromides." And always the article reminded us, drove home to us, which side of the political tracks Jesse Jackson comes from.

Jackson is a long shot for the nomination; and not just for his skin color: his remarks about Farrakhan, and Jews, weigh him down. But, like his famous namesake Reggie, he's the straw that stirs the Democratic party drink. And unlike his other famous

namesake Michael—and other prominent black politicians—he hasn't tried to whiten himself. That will probably finally unravel him. The *U.S. News* article concluded that Jackson "will continue to run until an elected black with years of obvious experience chooses to make the race too." Elected is the key word and I think excuse. Because I think in America in 1988, we don't mind letting niggers in the club, as long as they behave like white people.

—Bob Guccione, Jr.

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FLASH

Yomo Toro, a Curfew for
Go Go Clubs, Charlie Feathers, Henry Butler,
House of Freaks, Ex-Lion Tamers,

YOMO TORO



Donna Raniert

Children may have seen one of his many appearances on "Sesame Street" and New Yorkers in the Puerto Rican community have no doubt caught his TV show on channel 41. Some may have seen him in Rubén Blades's *Crossover Dreams* or heard his giddy cuatro music in Woody Allen's *Bananas*. But outside of New York and his native Puerto Rico, Yomo Toro is hardly a household name.

The 54-year-old virtuoso of the cuatro is hoping to change all that with the March release of his first major album, *Funky Jibaro* on Island's adventurous New Directions label. If anything, guitar freaks will drop their jaws after hearing Yomo's astonishing technique on that 10-stringed guitar-like instrument.

Listen to Yomo's beautiful, unaccompanied piece "Cuatro Feeling" and you'll get the picture. Or check out his burning flamenco lury on the intro of "Tributo a Los Angelitos Negros." The flowing melodicism recalls Django, the passion in his playing recalls John McLaughlin's fiery acoustic guitar flurries with Shakti. Call it Puerto Rican pyrotechnics. Or more precisely, call it *jibaro* music (pronounced *HEEB-ah-roé*). It's the native folk music of the Puerto Rican mountain people. And Yomo has become its unofficial ambassador, spreading the word and good feelings of *jibaro*.

Born in Ensenada, Puerto Rico, on July 26, 1933, Yomo Toro grew up in an environment rich with the sounds of *jibaro*.

"My father would hang his cuatro on a nail in the wall. And when he would go out I used to climb the bed there, reach up and start fooling around with it. When I was about seven-and-a-half, I was strumming his cuatro on the wall like that one day, and when I looked back I saw my father. I immediately fell back on the bed, you know, because I was very scared that he was going to punish me. But he heard what I was doing and he told me, 'You bring the cuatro down and play what I heard before.' And so he listened and he got very surprised. And he went out in the yard and cut a tree down right there and he built me a *cuatrito*, a very little cuatro. And when he finished, he gave it

to me and said, 'This is yours.' And on that little thing I learned a lot."

He began playing around his hometown and at age 15 scored his first professional gig in San Juan playing with Los Cuatro Aces. In 1953 that group came to New York to perform at the Puerto Rico Theatre in the Bronx, followed by appearances around Manhattan and Queens. Yomo's distinctive sound on the steel-stringed instrument turned heads in the New York musical community. He began collaborating with salsa musicians around town as well as picking up sideman recording gigs with names like Harry Belafonte and Edie Gormé.

Around 1969 he met up with salsa stars Willie Colón and Hector Lavoe and formed the powerhouse Fania All-Stars band. Soon after, Yomo decided to move from Puerto Rico to New York, settling in the Bronx. He continued recording and performing with the All-Stars on and off for the next 15 years while picking up more work as a session man for sound tracks and pop albums.

And now, finally, Yomo Toro gets to blow his own horn on *Funky Jibaro*. Robert Palmer of the *New York Times* has already referred to the rotund virtuoso as the Jimi Hendrix of the cuatro. Django Reinhardt, I think, is probably a closer comparison. Not quite as catchy, but more accurate.

But there is, as it turns out, at least one similarity to Jimi Hendrix after all. Namely, Yomo is a lefty who plays a righty instrument. And rather than re-stringing it, he merely takes a standard 10-stringed cuatro, turns it upside down and the rest is magic.

"I learn with my cuatro this way," he explains. "All my uncles and my father were righties. But I start like this, you know?"

The short, jolly man in the jaunty hat laughs and recalls a story.

"One time I was playing in the Puerto Rico Theatre and the melody player from Los Panchos Tria saw me pick up the cuatro and he told me, 'But you are opposite! Why don't you learn the right way?' And then when I start playing he said, 'No. Stay there. Don't change. You're OK there.'"

—Bill Milkowski



GO GO NO GO

If you're under 18 and looking for fun in Washington, D.C., go go clubs are the thing: dance halls where there are live bands, lots of dancing, no alcohol, and no parents. Thousands of kids flock to spots like Celebrity Hall and Acacia Masonic Hall weekly; the shows go on all night. So when the city council's Committee for Consumer and Regulatory Affairs met to discuss a possible curfew for the city's teens, over one hundred students showed up to put their collective foot (and petition) down.

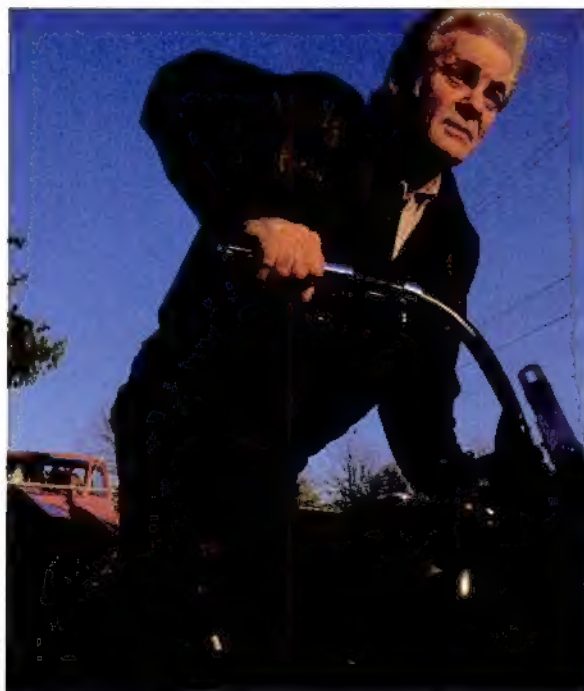
The large crowds have brought neighborhood complaints and erupted into several violent outbreaks, most recently the fatal stabbing of a 17-year-old outside the Celebrity in late October. The bill before the council called for the halls to bounce minors at 11:30 P.M. on weeknights, 1 A.M. on weekends. Proponents claim a curfew will get these kids out of the clubs, off the streets, and inside doing some homework. "What we're concerned about," said council member John Ray, "are bodies filled with good tunes but heads filled with nothing."

In addition to the students, council members, and parents who spoke during the seven-hour session, the local ACLU chapter defended the kids' right to party. "Curfews and time limitations have no effect," said spokesperson Coleen O'Connor. "They prohibit free trade of legitimate businesses and they're too far-reaching to solve the problem." Or, as D.C. teen Amanda Mackay put it, "I think it's pretty stupid. The clubs just aren't that bad. It's not gonna solve anything. We aren't gonna go home just because they decide there's a curfew. Why should I? I'm not doing anything wrong."

—Jessica Bendinger



Go goes EU—an alternative to homework?



Tony Folco

CHARLIE FEATHERS

Charlie Feathers, along with Sleepy LaBeef and a couple others, is the last of the old Memphis rockabillys to still rockabilly. Unlike LaBeef, who seems to be in town every time you open the paper, Charlie Feathers doesn't get out much anymore—a couple of shows last year overseas, where the aging teds still flock to see him, and an outdoor festival every once in a while, but the days of regular gigging are over. His interest in the bar he played regularly a decade back, up on Lamar Avenue, was sold years ago, and his son and guitar player, Bubba, without whom he never performs, has a band of his own now that plays regularly at Vapors Supper Club.

But Charlie Feathers is rockabilly's one remaining creator, not to mention its principal sage. While his old Sun labelmates went country or, like LaBeef or the Sun Session Rhythm Section led by Sonny Burgess, play nostalgia—albeit rocking nostalgia—for old timers, Feathers has continued to purvey, in increasing obscurity, a sound on the edge, as lonely and warped and epileptic as the vintage Sun stuff he can't forget.

Sitting in his little brick house ("It ain't much," he says, "but it is to us.") behind the Rebel Inn motel, Feathers has a lot of time to ruminate on his favorite subject. He sits with a guitar on his knee and a gut full of his daily waffles, his wife at the factory and the drapes drawn. He's probably recounted his version of the Sun heyday a thousand times if he's done it twice, but he's far beyond glad to do it again, recalling events with the rambling enthusiasm of a teenager who saw it yesterday and understood it in a much different sense than anyone else. In his version, of course, he plays a much greater role than is generally acknowledged, and he's come to expect doubters. "This is true, man!" he interjects frequently, or "You believe that?"—as though he is kidding when he says that "I Forgot to Remember to Forget" (a song he wrote) was a bigger hit for Elvis than any the King had at RCA, only RCA wanted to claim the first million seller. Or that if Elvis played the Grand

Canyon and filled it to the brim, Johnny Cash could walk up and buy every single person in the canyon, the King included. But he doesn't sound so bitter anymore. When he says "It was the greatest damn thing forever, no doubt about it!" recalling Elvis's recording of "Blue Moon of Kentucky," the first rockabilly record, it's out of appreciation for the birth of a sound, not just because he was in the booth (probably).

Charlie Feathers lives on that sound. Rockabilly is a lean, singleminded sound, nothing fancy, nothing gets in the way of the voice. You feel it or you don't. He talks about virtuoso guitarists who couldn't play it and guys who couldn't play worth a damn who could. While Feathers's sound has evolved over the decades—Bubba treads heavy on the wah-wah, for example, an effect that might make purists cringe—it may be the only true, wild rockabilly left. His swooping, hiccupping voice and Bubba's spare answer-licks turn even heard-a-billion times oldies into adventures in Schizoville; witness "Roll Over Beethoven" or "In the Pines" on his latest record, *New Jungle Fever* (New Rose). Sometimes you'd swear he'd been listening to old free jazz and at others to the demented punk roots bands that admire him, but clearly the inspiration is within.

Charlie Feathers is not interested in talking about his return to wax after a substantial hiatus, so much as about a song he worked out more recently. It's called "I Can't Seem to Remember to Forget," a tribute song to the golden days of Sun, with many song titles by Cash, Presley, Perkins, et al. thrown in for lyrics. He took the song to Sam Phillips recently, he says, because Sam owns a lot of those titles and has a well-appointed recording studio not too far from 706 Union. "Sam says it'll live forever, and you know something man, that's the damn truth." When I ask when the song will get a release, he says softly, "Aww, it'll die with me, man."

—Don Howland



Jody Buran

SEEING WITH HIS FINGERS

You'd think that someone as talented as Henry Butler would be famous, or would at least have recorded before he was 38. Butler is in the position of being a "jazz phenom" at a time in life when most musicians have a solid reputation. But the belated acclaim the blind pianist is now getting suits him. His 1986 debut, *Fivin' Around*, might just as well have been part of a five-year plan. It was as if Butler tried to pack nearly 40 years of ideas onto one album, everything from a string quartet playing Trane's "Giant Steps" to the north-of-the-border "L.A. Samba."

"I guess I didn't realize the limitations of a piece of vinyl until I actually tried to cram everything on it. There's just so much you can do with it before the grooves start to get too small."

His new album, *The Village*, is every bit as startling as his debut, but far more focused. Concentrating on his more lyrical post-bop affinities, there is a consistent thread throughout.

Every bit as amazing as what is in the grooves is the photo on the album's inside cover. It is a visually intriguing image, but what is most surprising about it is the photographer. Henry Butler. Now, it has been

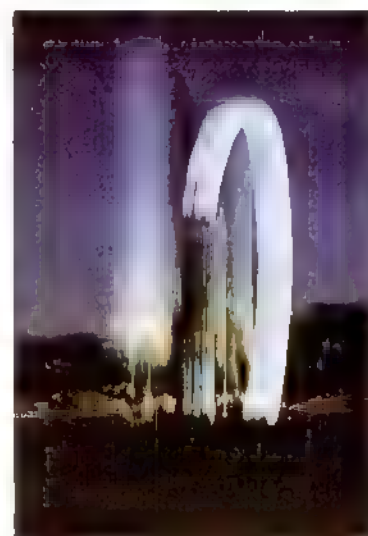
suggested that a blind photographer is as unusual as a deaf musician. After a fashion, Butler agrees:

"Beethoven went deaf and wrote his butt off. Actually, what he did was take a stick and put it in his mouth—this is not that well known—and he put the stick on the piano, so he had the connection. He could feel the vibrations. You'd be surprised by how much you can get from just feeling the vibrations. I played for this deaf junior-senior prom once, and those people were dancing right on the beat, and you say just because they can't hear they can't dance? They can feel it."

"All color is a group of vibrations, or different rates of vibrations. I don't need to see the picture. I just need to get what I want out of it. Part of what I want is to have that miracle moment, to feel that urge that will have me shoot the picture in the first place."

—Henry Bordowitz

One of Butler's photos. "All color is a group of vibrations."



Henry Butler



Drew Carlson

HOUSE OF FREAKS

The answers are: A year and a half; From a circus poster; We dated the same girl; No; and Because we wanted to. The band is just two guys, Bryan Harvey and Johnny Hott, who write good songs and music with a different construction, and who become transformed when they play.

The House of Freaks are originally from Richmond, Virginia, but have relocated to L.A. Bryan plays guitar and sings and Johnny plays drum(s). Their 45 "Bottom of the

Ocean" is great but they're better live, where their stage performance defies their minimal format. They play hard and short and tight and wild and just suck you in with their energy.

"There a lot of good things about having just two people in the band," says Bryan. "It's very easy to come to a decision on a matter. You get two votes and you agree or disagree. And if you disagree you just talk about it until you both agree." Sounds sensible. "Or we arm wres-

tle. In which case I always win. Okay, wait, I let Johnny win sometimes. And it's easier when you're in places like New York; all you have to worry about is one other person. There's less equipment. Less people to pay. Less people packed into the car. You both get a bed in a motel room. It's easy to crash at people's houses. More stage room. Sound checks are quicker. But on the negative side, it's a helluva lot more work on stage, and also if things are bad, there's only two of you to take the blame."

There are a lot of canine references in their songs, and House of Freaks have at times encouraged their audience to get down on all

fours and howl like dogs. So what is it with the dogs?

"We were actually thinking about this old hound dog thing, Big Mama Thornton and all," says Bryan. "And anyhow, this bit about getting drunk and howling like a dog, it's kinda funny to us. There's a lot of lyrics that dogs come up in. There's not too many women in my life but a lot of dogs."

(The questions are: How long have you been together? How did you get the name? How did you meet? Are you going to get a bass player? And why did you sign with Rhino Records?)

—Karen McBurnie



"Basically, we were Wire for three weeks, except they had to be legends and we didn't." Jim DeRogatis is a typical Wire fanatic from Hoboken who plays drums. But unlike other devotees, he did something with his obsession. He formed the Ex-Lion Tamers, an all-Wire cover band.

When the real Wire heard about it, they thought their prayers were answered: somebody could play their old songs for them while they had beers backstage. Wire invited the Ex-Lion Tamers to tour America.

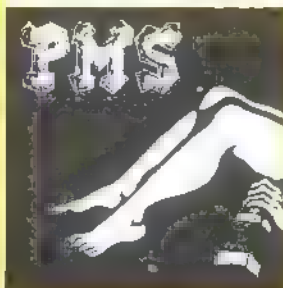
At every Wire show, the Ex-Lion Tamers would come on first and play Wire's entire *Pink Flag* album without pausing, except to say "side two." Wire told radio deejays that the Ex-Lion Tamers were their biggest influence and favorite band. Says Jim, "They started acting very paternal toward us, as if we were their illegitimate offspring or something. Wire kept asking if we were eating all right."

As for future plans, there's talk of Wire rereleasing the out-of-print *Pink Flag* album and having the Ex-Lion Tamers rerecord it. Jim says, "Maybe in ten years we'll do another tour with them and play the entire *Ideal Copy* album."

—Jay Blumenfeld

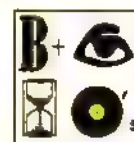
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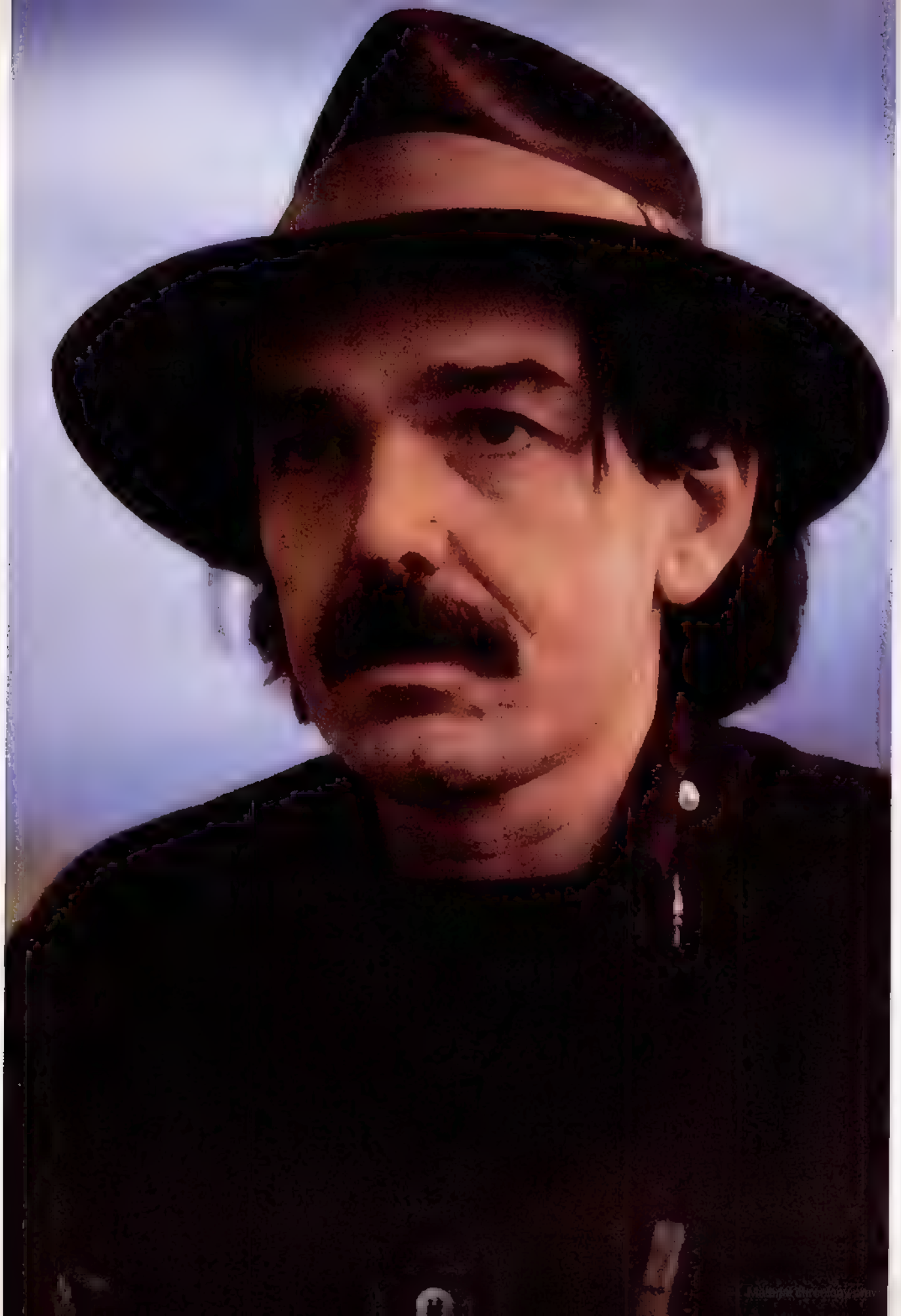
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WHERE'S THE CAPTAIN?

In 1982 Captain Beefheart moved out of his mobile home in the Mojave Desert and retired from the music business. He can run but he can't hide.

Article by
Kristine McKenna

Photography by
Anton Corbijn

Don Van Vliet was born in Glendale, California, on January 15, 1941, the only child of Glenn and Sue Van Vliet. Don began showing artistic talent at a very young age but Glenn and Sue were none too keen on having an artist in the family. "'Cause you know, all artists are faggots," Don explains. When he was young, the family moved to the Mojave Desert, an isolated, brutal environment that they hoped would bleach the creative juice out of their son. But Van Vliet's drive to translate the world around him into art only intensified; in 1966 he introduced himself to the world as Captain Beefheart.

Beginning with his debut LP, *Safe As Milk* (1966), and continuing through 11 subsequent albums, Captain Beefheart replaced conventional approaches to language with a startling marriage of rural folk tales, voodoo, ecological propagandizing, punning, free association, and a spectrum of sound that stretched from Charles Ives, Stravinsky, jazz, and delta blues to the natural sounds of the Mojave desert. Beefheart's five-octave vocal range allowed him to slip from character to character as he ruminated on his pet themes: the wonderfulness of women, nature, man's stunning stupidity and spiritual sloth, and the splendor of everything in the galaxy from Halley's Comet to a rusty nail.

Often dismissed as a charming eccentric, Beefheart never fared too well in the musical marketplace, and in 1982, after his eleventh—and what he claims to be his last—album, *Ice Cream for Crow*, he moved from his mobile home in the desert to northern Arizona, and devoted himself to his painting. In 1985 Julian Schnabel helped arrange a showing of Van Vliet's paintings at the Mary Boone Gallery in New York. The show was well received, and exhibitions at the Michael Werner Gallery in Cologne, Germany, and the Leslie Waddington Gallery in London followed. Beefheart now shows his work regularly in London and Cologne, and recently published a book of his poetry and paintings called *Skeleton Breath, Scorpion Blush*. He now makes a comfortable living as an artist—something he was never able to do as a musician. Though he continues to compose and play music for his own pleasure, he says he has no intention of trying to sell his musical wares.

What's your sense of the future?

The future is random—I choose to think that because the alternative is too frightening. Then again, death isn't that frightening, although we're certainly taught to be afraid of it. Society does a real good job, doesn't it? As far as the immediate future,

Charlton Heston will probably be our next president. God, I can't stand that guy! We're gonna have a big yellow tooth on TV and it'll be President Heston. I hope my prediction doesn't come true, but it wouldn't surprise me if it did.

Would you describe yourself as an angry man?

When I was three years old I was very disappointed to open a dictionary and read "the great auk—extinct." Now that didn't leave me with much faith in humanity. The dictionary illustration of it is pretty good, too, and here they've been killed off! That gorgeous bird! What the hell! The passenger pigeon is gone, the snail darter is gone—we won't ever see one. These things really bother me.

Is anger a productive emotion?

Yes, it is if you treat it right. Your heart won't attack you if you're nice to it.

What things make you sad?

First we have to find out what "sad" is, which is something I don't know. There's that get-well-card idea of sad, but I don't like that clown stuff. I do like the idea of painting a clown, only not the kind of clowns they clown around with. I have some funny clowns in my paintings.

What's the most significant difference between men and women?

Women are more dolphin-like, and they're obviously better looking. Proboscis monkeys look pretty good, too. Jesus, those things have wise faces. But men—they're shits! Queers! Shits! The whole race has a problem. They don't like to be trained! I sound like one of those mean courtmasters or a German general, but when it comes to art I have a real streak of fascism. I want it to be exactly the way I conceived it, and if one line is changed, it's like hey, fuck it, I don't need it. The reason I quit doing music is because it was too hard to control all the other people I needed to play the stuff. I'd had enough animal training. I did enjoy playing with Eric Feldman, though. He's really nice and his folks are the most incredible people I've ever met in my life. His mother and father used to come see the music and actually really dig it. Can you imagine that? They lived in a nice house in the San Fernando Valley near this cigar store called the Tinderbox, and he—his name was Harold—had a T-Bird and it looked good. He dressed really nice and he'd sit there, with Liz, and wait for us to go on. They weren't there just to see their son, they wanted to hear some blow. One time I said to him, "Oh, you're here to see Eric," and he replied in this real serious way, "Watch it." That was his way of saying, I'm here to see the whole thing. Eric lives in San



Francisco on Haight Street now.

Did you spend any time in San Francisco when it was the center of the universe?

Yeah, and I thought it was very corny, like a red movie, a real cheapo, low-budget horror movie. I mean, come on, lava lamps? Good God!

Have you ever spent time in a city where you felt something special and extraordinarily creative was going on?

Yeah, New York, but that was quite a while ago. These days it reminds me of a bowl of underpants. It's filthy there. It did have some good periods though [Hums a few bars of "I'll Take Manhattan"]. I stayed at the Gramercy Park Hotel and they were very nice to me. I liked the girl who worked there. She was going with a senator and she dug my music. I couldn't believe it. She really knew my music. She must've been real hip and real bored. How do you account for the fact that some people have an insatiable appetite for things that are intense and unusual, whereas other people prefer things to be calm and predictable?

Gray matter. The big trick. They have more to turn over I guess.

Was Freud right?

Absolutely not. He was an opportunistic imbecile. He thought the female vagina was comparable to the nostril. Now that isn't funny! That's a hell of a thing to put on women, for chrissake. I don't think of it that way.

Why did people take to his ideas so eagerly?

Because people are stupid.

Which of the four elements are you most drawn to? It would have to be fire.

What does fire signify to you?

Can I get in and out of it fast enough?

What are your favorite smells?

Ah, now we're into tinctures. I like the smell of fungus, and loam is awfully nice, too. I like damp, outdoors smells. They have incredible moss where I live. I like the smell of cotton, too—I wear cotton pajamas quite often. Cotton and silk are my favorite materials. I just bought a wonderful coat made of faded cotton by this guy Calvin Klein who must be real hip. I don't know anything about him, but he sure did turn out a good product.

Most people aren't aware that you're interested in clothes and are in fact a bit of a dandy. You're also quite knowledgeable about beer, whiskey, chocolate, and cigars. Is there anything you care to recommend?

Hmmm. Today it would have to be La Phraogue single malt whiskey.

There are a number of objects you've told me you're extremely fond of—darning eggs, red enamel thumb tacks, and the Cootie, which was a large, plastic toy bug that was around in the fifties and sixties. What attracts you to these things?

They're correct in every way—shape, color, everything. You know, that guy Calvin Klein somehow got onto that Cootie consciousness—the colors he uses are similar to those things. Yeah, that's some very intelligent work going on there.

What sort of landscape do you find most compelling?

I like the ocean and where it ends—the horizon line. That's a good spot. I dig the fjords, too—they're in Norway. I've seen some pretty unusual things—I've seen 19 saucers, for instance. Those were interesting experiences, and seeing them didn't scare me—but then, I don't know what fear is. The idea of safety is nice, but how can we protect ourselves? There are demons without and within. I wish they wouldn't paint.



Amaretto di Noe

Amaretto di Noe is available at Saronno anywhere in the U.S. call 1-800-238-4373.
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Is it true that your father drove a Helm's Bakery truck for 25 years?

Yeah, he did. Have you ever had any of their stuff? You would've dug it. No preservatives. My father used to bring that stuff home but I wouldn't eat it because I wanted to be svelte. I was really a screwball when I was younger. I'm talking about eating and running—I used to do that. I wanted to look good in the clothing I had tailor-made. I started having a tailor make my clothes when I was 19. That was the only way to go. The first thing I had made was a suit with a vest, an English type of thing. The first time I wore it I went to this place called Pipp's, which was a damn good place at one time. I didn't go there with a date but I had one by the time I left. Yeah, the suit worked quite well. But I kept worrying about her getting her damn makeup on my suit! Why would anybody wear makeup is what I'd like to know—although I guess it's alright once in a while, just a little eyeliner.

Didn't you used to wear makeup on stage?

Yeah, I did a couple of times, but it was distortive makeup. I'm talking about red lips and yellow eyelids—just nutty things, which was really stupid, but sort of hip, too. Not nearly as hip as somebody like Laurence Olivier, though. I mean, good God, you don't even know he's there!

Are you surprised that you continue to be a presence in the music world despite the fact that you vacated the premises six years ago?

Yeah, it is surprising. The people who still listen to my music must understand that I never meant them any harm—I just felt that some change was in order. There was nothing mean in what I was doing, although nature can be pretty mean, and nature is what that music was about. But not nature with a

loincloth.

Do you ever miss being involved in the music business?

No. The first flash I had on everything I ever did was it for me. All the rest was just the laborious effort of trying to recreate that flash correctly. It was all about memory, really. I'm glad I have a good memory.

You think memory is a blessing rather than a curse? It's definitely a blessing. I sure as hell hate the idea of geriatric wards. Now that to me is sad.

How do you explain the disdain this culture has for old age?

This culture is out of its mind. I was old when I was young so I could be young the rest of my life. That approach seems to be working out quite well for me.

Can wisdom only be attained through painful experience?

I don't think it has anything to do with that. Some people have the same painful experience time after time and they still don't get it. Boring, aren't they? I think wisdom is more the result of a lucky birth—either that or a frightening birth.

Does the art world treat you better than the music world did?

Oh yeah. I've met some incredible people in the art world. My dealer in London, Leslie Waddington, is a wonderful individual. He knew Matisse and lots of other great characters. Yeah, I'm much better off now. I'm just up here painting and getting beat up by my cats. These creatures are so intelligent it's frightening, especially this cat of mine named Garland. He's as smart as a chimpanzee and he tricks me in every way. You know they don't know that much about cats. Cats just came in and started liv-



When I was around two years old I looked inside that Hamilton Beach mixer and I saw the universe in there.

ing among humans. You wouldn't believe what I do for these things! I'm not that good at gymnastics but I bend over and pet Garland for 15 minutes while he's eating. Garland likes Lightnin' Hopkins but he has too much ego to listen to my music. If I'm listening to my music while I paint and Garland walks up I have to turn off the music or he won't come in the room.

What was your most memorable encounter with an animal other than man?

During the time I was rehearsing to record *Trout Mask Replica*, I saw a coyote in Woodland Hills. I think it was playing, but it hit one of my fingers and knocked me down. It was exciting and I wasn't afraid—it was great seeing some wildlife. This happened exactly at 6:20 P.M. It was almost dark, or damn near. It was twilight time, or whatever they

call it. There's a line on *Trout Mask*—"It breaks my heart to see the highway cross the hill"—that may have something to do with my encounter with that coyote.

You've said that it's highly unlikely that you'll ever record another album of music. Is there a possibility you might record a spoken-word album of you reading some of your writings?

That's quite possible, but it's a frightening idea. I get scared to death when I recite—even the thought of it makes my mouth dry. Poetry is scary to me. I think Philip Larkin may be the best poet I've ever read.

Better than Shakespeare?

No, nobody's that good. I mean the idea of his name even . . . wow! Willie the Shake, that's what Lord Buckley called him.

Were you a fan of Buckley's?

No. He was a comedian for hippies with liberal tendencies and I can't make that junction.

Is it true you met Malcolm X?

Yeah, I was 13 at the time and I met him in L.A. at the corner of Sixth and Spring. Why did they kill him? That really upsets me. He was one of the good ones. Anyhow, he was downtown giving a speech and I'd taken a bus down there to find a pair of shoes. Oh, I was a nut. I was looking for a pair of City Club shoes, which is a very plain, pointed opera pump. I found the shoes.

What are the sounds your paintings make?

Shadows breathing on themselves.

You recently told me that you think music sounds best over the phone. Can you explain why?

Because it's monaural, and the way the phone distorts music is my favorite distortion.

What's the most significant change you've observed in yourself over the past year?

I'm more content because I'm doing exactly what I want to do and nobody can say anything about it. But then, how could they say anything about my music? Why did they? People consider music a collaborative medium but I was never collaborating with anyone. My cat Garland is probably the one creature on earth I'll defer to—Garland and my wife, Jan. I try to get Jan involved in my painting but she refuses to be. She dances out of reach.

When you're feeling psychically and spiritually depleted how do you restore yourself?

A Mrs. Grace chocolate fudge cake. I feel like saying "Take me to your leader" when I see one of those things.

What's your favorite appliance?

A Hamilton Beach Mixer. We had one of those when I was little. When it wore out we took it apart and I mean, my God! Have you seen those brushes in the dark? When I was around two years old I looked inside that Hamilton Beach Mixer and I saw the universe in there.

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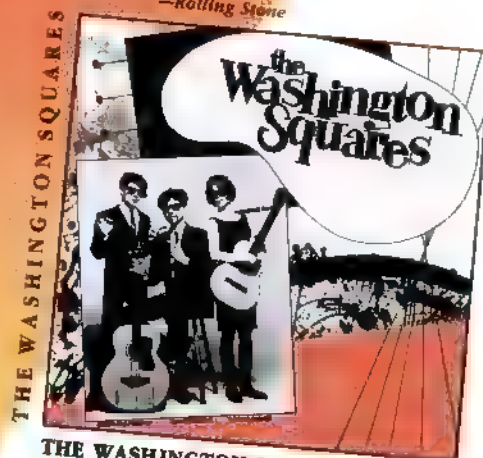
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Mark Meeks

SPINS

Jonathan Richman,
Chris Stamey, Game Theory,
Negativland, Otis Clay,
O.V. Wright,
the Colorblind James
Experience

Platter du Jour

**Jonathan Richman and
the Modern Lovers**
Modern Lovers 88
Rounder

Just as the leaves are zig-zagging to the ground and the frost is on the pumpkin, Jonathan Richman releases an album bursting with sun, fun, and late-night falafel stands. Richman has made a career of marking his own calendar. And he's done an admirable job of keeping his head above each trendy wave, remaining rock's great innocent, happier to write a how-do-you-do to a bug in the grass than a "Stairway to Heaven."

Since the seventies, Richman's ability to stretch bubblegum music until it popped and his flair for romantic minimalism have provided a dramatic counterpoint to the bombastic side of rock 'n' roll. He and his ever-changing backup group, the Modern Lovers, were an American classic, as self-consciously spare as others were overblown. Richman's nerdy monotone sailing through such numbers as "Roadrunner," "Pablo Picasso," and "Rockin' Rockin' Leprechaun" tweaked a nerve in the socially inept and started a musical undercurrent whose ripples continue today. The Modern Lovers also provided a breeding ground for future stars: David Robinson whacked drums for them be-

fore he joined the Cars, and Jerry Harrison put down great organ riffs before joining the Talking Heads. But breakups, re-formations, sloppy label deals, and Richman's own unnerving artistic idiosyncrasies often threatened to scuttle his career, or at least brand it with the dreaded "cult band" tag.

Happily, *Modern Lovers 88* finds Richman firmly back on track. The 11-song album can be compared to a picture drawn in school by a first-grader, which is then proudly brought home, hung on the refrigerator with magnets, and admired not for its technical acumen but for its purity of spirit.

This time, Richman has chosen guitarist Brennan Totten and drummer Johnny Avila as his Modern Lovers. Throughout, Richman is content to strum on his six-string, throw in some Ventures and Beach Boys licks, and shake his curly hair while Totten and Avila provide the barest of foundations, "ooooing" and "woooing" through the chorus and banging on something that sounds suspiciously like an oatmeal box.

Often the songs seem like postcards from the displaced Massachusetts native who's recently settled in California. Although the topics aren't any weightier than a party in the desert or finding your way around a new neighborhood, Richman does such a great job of reducing the bullshit and popping musical Polaroids into your head that in less than three minutes you'll find yourself nostalgic for a long walk home on a hot night and the smell of fried food from a nearby stand.

But like everything he touches, the humor is of-

ten counterbalanced with just a trace of cynicism. On "Circle I" he can barely contain snickering at health food ranchers in sunny California ("Naked in the sun/They got a suntan on their bun") or goofing on a "California Desert Party," where the guest list includes petroglyphs and kit foxes. But, just as suddenly, he'll come out of left field with an endearing lace valentine to Harpo Marx ("When Harpo Played His Harp") or address the heady rush of love by reiterating a simple yet expansive phrase: "Gail Loves Me."

Occasionally, the thin ice of simplicity gives way and Richman plunges into what seems like a struggle with a retarded adolescence. The root beer stand and purple squirtgun images of "I Have Come Out to Play" sound maudlin and forced when juxtaposed with the genuine innocence that permeates the rest of the album. But all is forgiven with the final number, a bare-bones rendition of "The Theme from *Moulin Rouge*." It's a tender and achingly heartfelt moment that could easily have dissolved into sappiness if it weren't coming from such a sincere voice and feeling guitar. Here it serves as a tender farewell lullaby in which one of our most singular performers tucks the listener in, draws the curtain tight against the cold, then quickly and quietly leaves the room, closing the door behind him.

—Jim Daly

Chris Stamey
It's Alright
Coyote/A&M

North Carolina emigrant Chris Stamey has served a thankless decade as the primary unit of comparison for smarty-pants pop mischief, first as co-leader of the dB's and lately as a solo artist. Now, with R.E.M. riding high on the charts and numerous other old drinkin' buddies and admitted fans making noticeable commercial inroads, he finally seems ready to sidle up to the mainstream himself.

A tip-off: *It's Alright* features contributions from nearly every marketable name Stamey's been linked with during his long, willfully checkered career: drummer Anton Fier and sundry charter members of his and Chris's sometimes-group the Golden Palominos have pitched in; Mitch Easter and Richard Lloyd guest on guitars, Marshall Crenshaw and Chris's erstwhile employer Alex Chilton add the odd token backup vocal. Stamey's entitled, of course, to all the endorsement he can muster. After all, he perfected and championed the calculating, deliberately-convoluted-yet-mellifluous post-pop guitar brouhaha that's bread 'n' butter to all the above.

More to the point: for once Stamey lets his excellent tunes speak for them-

selves. *It's Alright* is remarkably free from the self-conscious conceptual gymnastics that have been his trademark in the past. "When We're Alone" has been fleshed out from the spectral Popol Vuh-ish version on the "Instant Excitement" EP to an ultra-perky, instantly programmable collegiate hit. "The Seduction" is as cute a ditty as he's ever penned, delivered with quiet dignity and great panache on acoustic guitar with sparse percussion accents and Jane Scarpantoni's mournful cello lines. And "Big Time," a holdover from his final days with the dB's, rocks forthrightly. It's a good, solid song, performed . . . uh, good and solid, but kind of unimaginative, some fans might object. On earlier outings, flimsy compositions were routinely salvaged by Chris's off-beat arrangements, his use of unusual instrumentation, and surprising twists of timing and key. Now, the weaker songs, including "From the Word Go" and "If You Hear My Voice," get very orthodox, commonplace treatments, and end up flat-out boring.

Nonetheless, the best cut on *It's Alright*, "Incredible Happiness," demonstrates the new-deal firepower that

Stamey mounts. Leading the lineup with which he normally performs live, Chris attacks the song's classic melody in a simple, direct, and deliberately authoritative way, while deftly inserting a tricky soul-tinged undercurrent and a multi-hued gush of infectious vocal and guitar hooks. Thanks, Chuckles.

—Howard Wuelfing, Jr.

Game Theory
Lolita Nation
Enigma



After two LPs of offbeat but awfully catchy op-art pop, Scott Miller and Game Theory have elected to shinny way out on an aesthetic limb. The new album, *Lolita Nation*, is a weighty double set that's as densely packed with information as a computer data code burst.

Lolita Nation is a thoroughly perplexing conglomeration of brief instrumental shards and stabs of *musique concrète* mysteriously sampled off of old Game Theory records, alongside some of the gutsiest, most distinctive rock 'n' roll heard in 1987. The proper songs, like "The Real Sheila," have sumptuous melodic hooks Bryan Adams or the Smithereens would kill for, played with startling intensity and precision. The hot licks are packed in so tightly that the tracks seem set to explode at points. In mixing, producer Mitch Easter has tried to sort out the individual ingredients of each arrangement and prevent confusing overkill; he's exaggerated differences of texture and tone and set them up serially, in mini sound collages. Nothing is done in a simple, straightforward or mundane manner.

Game Theory boss man Scott Miller



Carol Whaley

is a prime specimen of that curious breed, the American Smart-pop Brat. Having recognized at an early age that Roxy Music copped "Remake/Remodel" wholesale from the Monkees' "Stepping Stone," he's embraced both high and low stylistic elements of rock: cerebral, conceptual high jinks as well as the dumb, sing-along fun. On *Lolita Nation*, he takes this volatile combination to extremes few others have dared visit before—maybe Chris Stamey with the Sneakers or Alex Chilton's Cossacks. "The Waist and the Knees" is one of the most excessive, exhilarating slices of post-pop mayhem I've ever heard. Beginning with percolating, cross-rhythmic percussion à la 100 Flowers and a darting, rapier of a lead guitar, the tune builds to a heart-stopping climax, then breaks into an extended succession of abrupt, chaotic, noisy solos—"Editions of You" redone for the post-Flipper generation.

Lolita Nation may not be the easiest musical experience to come to grips with, but then again, well, it's just not.

—Howard Wuelfing, Jr.

Negativland Escape from Noise SST

This announcement, from the producers of this record, contains important information for radio program directors, and is not for broadcast. The first cut on this record has been cross-format-focused for airplay success.

Remember in sixth grade, you had those film strips, and the guy who narrated them had this really measured, steady voice? It was kind of reassuring when you were young, and creepy as you got older. Imagine this dude on acid and you get some idea of what Negativland's *Escape from Noise* sounds like.

As you well know, a record must break on radio in order to actually provide a living for the artists involved. Up until now, you've had to make these record-breaking decisions on

your own, relying on perplexing intangibilities like taste and intuition. But now, there's a better way.

This record is a nutty-madcap-laff-riot of a disc, or a lot of silly sound effects sandwiched between guitar noise, or both.

The cut that follows is the product of newly developed compositional techniques, based on state-of-the-art marketing analysis technology.

Negativland is from San Francisco, and must be faves of the flourishing art scene there because this album is chock-full of famous S.F. artists: Fred Frith, Henry Kaiser, the Residents, Jerry Garcia, Jello Biafra, etc., etc.

This cut has been analytically designed to break on radio, and it will . . . sooner or later. For the station that breaks it first, the benefits are obvious; you'll lead the pack.

Most of the songs aren't really songs (though many have rhythm tracks and instrumental backings); they're more like vignettes: the kind of stuff you hear when your cable box fucks up and you get two or more channels at the same time.

Yes, no matter what share of this crazy market you do business in, no other release is going to satisfy your corporation's current idea of good radio like this one. On this cut we're working together, on the same wavelength, in scientific harmony.

It's about politics, religion, TV, radio, corporations, guns, money, materialism, doctors, and Michael Jackson.

But remember, this cut is constructed for multimarket breaking now. Don't waste valuable research with needless delay. We've done the hard work of insuring your success; the final step is up to you. Special designer song follows in five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . one . . .

It's weird, funny, and thoughtful, like a lot of people I know.

—Chris Carroll

Opposite: Chris Stamey. Below: Negativland walking away from Disneyland.



BRAVE NEW BLUES





O.V. Wright, world's most underrated soul singer.

Otis Clay
Trying to Live My Life Without You
 Hi/Demon import reissue

O.V. Wright
The Wright Stuff
 Hi/Demon import reissue

Otis Clay never had a Top 40 hit. He was never profiled in a major magazine. He never got to lip-synch on "Soul Train." But the man can sing—sing in that down-home, gritty way that could only be described as soul. *Trying to Live My Life Without You* documents his last shot at the big time.

Like so many other soul singers, Clay started out singing in the church. He switched to secular music in the early sixties and recorded a series of singles for some small regional labels. He had a brief fling with Atlantic that produced his only R&B chart success, a cover of "She's About a Mover," which wobbled to number 47. He signed with Hi Records in late 1971, and entered the converted theater that was producer Willie Mitchell's recording studio. Working together up to 1973, they made the best recordings of Clay's career.

The tracks on *Trying to Live My Life Without You* are simply breathtaking. The backbeat slaps like a wet towel on tile. The organ, bass, and guitar,

played by the fabulous Hodges Brothers, groove like one man with six hands. And Otis sings and sings and sings. Just drop the needle on "That's How It Is" and listen to Otis shout "Please somebody take a hand and slap some sense into me" and you know you're in for 40 minutes of solid-soul secular testifying. Unfortunately, by the time Otis waxed these tracks it was just too late for another soul shouter to hit the charts. Times and tastes were already changing to funk and disco.

If Clay recorded during the twilight of the soul years, O.V. Wright's Hi recordings, also produced by Mitchell, were waxed during the dreary disco years of 1977 and 1978. Like Clay, O.V. got his start in the church and became something of a Memphis gospel



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Photo: Michael Ochs Archive

star. He switched over to soul music in the early sixties, and in 1967, his biggest hit, "Eight Men, Four Women," on the Backbeat label, made it up the charts. But a succession of poor tunes and bad career moves prevented O.V. from ever returning to the top ten.

The Wright Stuff starts out with incredible promise. O.V. squeezes out a tortured vocal introduction accompanied only by a few ripples of gospel piano. The drums kick in and wham! You're smack in the middle of a disco tune...but incredibly good disco. The album seems like it's going to live up to O.V.'s potential. But Wright and Mitchell can't sustain the feeling of the first track. Although there are great moments, like the sensitive reading of "Precious, Precious" and the heartfelt "Without You," most of the record finds producer and artist valiantly struggling to fit into a new and unfamiliar format.

If you've never heard O.V. before, you'd be better off searching for his excellent Charlie reissue called *Gone for Good*, which contains the performances upon which his reputation is built. But if you're hungry for more, *The Wright Stuff* is still worth checking out.

O.V. Wright died, broken and forgotten, in 1980, never realizing the great potential of his mid-sixties records. Otis Clay is still on the road, still singing with fire and energy, and still

recording for small labels. These records are worthy reminders of the power and beauty of soul music.

—Jeff Rosen

The Colorblind James Experience

The Colorblind James Experience Earring



If it's true that great art requires suffering, then perhaps we can attribute Colorblind James's unique view of life to his monochromatic disability. Though James may see life as a colorless experience, his use of melody and words demonstrates a wacky palette of musical tricks. His droll matter-of-

fact delivery walks the line between confidence and bewilderment; the result on his debut LP is ten poetic tracks that reek of a bullheaded life's-a-bitch-and-then-you-die positivism.

James and his group, the Colorblind James Experience, are masters of good-time music—a timeless mish-mash of jug band, country, R&B, and marching band—a style last popularized by musicians like Dan Hicks and Geoff Muldaur. The compositions on this self-titled album are riff-driven personal tales that feature virtuoso acoustic handiwork. A jazzy walking upright bass and swinging vibraphone (manned by James himself) maneuver through the album with a determined innocence. In keeping with the roots approach, no synthesizers or electronic drums appear.

Despite the musical motif, the Colorblind James Experience is not a send-off of the acoustic Americana revival. This album is a freewheeling, low-tech eighties collage of happy music and reflective poetry. It moves, it grooves, and it penetrates James's inner psyche. Never before, for example, has the Freudian dilemma of id and superego been probed with the affability and deftness of CBJ's "A Different Bob." The narrator, named Bob, hears his girlfriend dreaming out loud about "Bob." But it's not him she's speaking of in her sleep, it's a "different Bob."

The arrangements of the tunes are wild and reckless and the band passes around musical hooks like they were basketballs. On "Considering a Move to Memphis," for example, the guitar and banjo introduce a catchy descending melody that then gets tossed to the background vocals, then to the bass, and finally back to the string section. G. Elwyn Meixner's string dexterity is another highlight, particularly his guitar on "The German Girls" and banjo on "Considering a Move to Memphis."

As with the best good-time music, there is also a maudlin undercurrent on the album. It surfaces to full view on "Fledgling Circus," a cinematic folk composition about a good-hearted but negligent roustabout who single-handedly causes the destruction of a traveling sideshow. After dispatching the strong man, the lion tamer, and a trapeze family, the only person(s) who will talk to him is the two-headed woman. You can smell the sawdust in the air as James sings his tale of salvation and redemption.

There is a shifting playfulness to this recording. Though some listeners may find James's recitative delivery as colorless as his moniker, the combined effect of his character tales and strong compositions makes for a positively polychromatic debut.

—Rich Stim



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SINGLES



Column by John Leland

Samuel Beckett in his disco period heralded the coming of an art that would be a "total object, complete with missing parts, instead of partial object." At a time when engineers are programming drum machines to reflect the imperfect push and pull of a human drummer, trying to complete the picture by including error, these words seem especially relevant.

The question, nominally, is one of feel. Drum computers that work as metronomes are considered too pushy; they define the beat as a point rather than as a pocket. For their overbearing insistence, more than for their computerized blips, drum machines often sound dehumanized, dehumanizing. Even compared to seventies disco drummers, who wired their heads to electronic metronomes to eliminate human inconsistencies, beatboxes don't swing.

But dance music by its nature loves new things, particularly new technologies; over the last decade, most progressive developments in pop music have come out of discos. Despite the popular image of mindless disco-gers, this audience embraces change more readily than most. So the idea of reprogramming a new machine to repeat an old sound seems contrary to the culture's internal logic. If drum computers changed the feel of the beat, you might expect the musicians

and producers to create a new music celebrating the new feel. And to an extent they have: from Kraftwerk to Dead or Alive, computer disco is very much with us. Yet the will to make the machine invisible pushes on.

At the same time, as Beckett might have predicted, the new disco has opened its maroon velvet cord to a new breed of singer. She's young, she's brassy, she's knee-deep in puppy love. "Put me out 'cause I'm on fire/And I can't quench my desire/I'm burning up for your love," she sings on one song. Or, "Oooh baby I'm gonna love you from head to toe." Her true love comes to her only in her dreams. Her passion heeds not the warning signs of modern love; her voice, similarly, heeds not the constraints of Western musical notation. If she hits a true note, you can alert the wire services.

Time was when a disco diva was a creature of rare athletic beauty. When singers like Loleatta Holloway and Chaka Khan roamed the earth, passion, no matter how crushing, met its match in an equally bruising set of pipes. Like professional wrestlers, Holloway and Khan in their day brought the obvious (and universal) into a theater of giant, unambiguous gestures. That the outcome was fixed didn't matter. When they loved—and yes, of course they loved—they did so with a force capable of bringing empires to their knees. When their men proved unworthy—and yes, of course

their men proved unworthy of a love that could fell empires—the singers suffered agonies of Biblical scope. On every other record, some fine man drove a locomotive over one of their trustingly offered hearts. It was only by some miracle or an extreme lack of prudence that they were able to love again as unreservedly the next time they made a record. Like wrestlers, they came back absolutely or not at all. Like favored wrestlers, they always came back.

Today's disco singer would be unwise to offer her heart to an oncoming locomotive. She is made of different stuff. Like ordinary mortals, Madonna, Lisa Lisa, Nancy Martinez, the Cover Girls, Janet Jackson, Exposé, Kim Wilde, Debbie Gibson, Nocera, Double Destiny, Stacey Q, Company B, Belinda Carlisle, and a big handful of others know love and heartache on a scale not necessarily commensurate with their expressive abilities. When these women find themselves lost in emotion, they cannot, like Loleatta Holloway, transcend normal human language to give voice to a love the size of a house. Instead, they transgress the vocabulary of pop song. If individual notes suffer in the process, so be it.

Like most disco stories, this one returns to the producers, men like Andy Panda, Lewis Martineé, and Farley "Jackmaster" Funk. If the singers have no choice about their singing skills, the producers do. And although most

of these men probably maintain shrines to Holloway in their homes, they've built successful careers on making records with less miraculous singers. Like the fellows who program irregularities into drum machines, the new disco producers, whose business is certainly to create objects, make their objects complete by providing—or perhaps accepting—flaws.

If disco uses theater—and to some degree it all does—it relies on a modicum of trust. "Make me believe in you," sang Patti Jo on her cult classic of the same name. "Show me that love can be true." Holloway and Khan proved it by being bigger than cynicism, bigger than heartache. Who could question the word of someone who could sing like that? The divas offered the next best thing to divine assurance; the grandiosity of their gestures spoke of a love that could be not only real, but ideal. On the other hand, when Jody Watley's voice becomes almost as flat as her forehead on "Don't You Want Me," her assurance is of a more mystical order: whatever has possessed her to make these noises is beyond question. Like a mystic or a traveler, Watley accrues the authority of someone who has had access to privileged information; she's on the guest list to a party the rest of us can't even find.

This is potentially revolutionary music built on conservative principles. It'd be hard to name another era in which producers sold millions of records by undermining their product. It seems natural and probably healthy to consider these acts and their success an isolated, temporary phenomenon. But I can see more possibilities for radical music in the way these groups make the mechanisms of pleasure visible than in the neo-liberalism of Sting or John Cougar Mellencamp.

Only thing is, I can't see anyone taking advantage of the possibilities.

HOT THINGS

- M/A/R/R/S**, "Pump Up the Volume" (4th & B'way)
- Stevie Wonder**, "Skeletons" (Tamla)
- Biz Markie**, "Pickin' Boogers" (Prism)
- Just-Ice with KRS One**, "Going Way Back" (Sleeping Bag)
- Sybil**, "My Love Is Guaranteed," (Next Plateau)
- Asher D and Daddy Freddy**, "Ragamuffin Hip-Hop" (Profile)
- Stetsasonic with Rev. Jesse Jackson**, "A.F.R.I.C.A." (Tommy Boy)
- EPEE MD**, "It's My Thing" b/w "You're a Customer" (Sleeping Bag)
- D.J. Short & Max Zeke**, "My Phone" (Hechomance)
- Cookie Crew**, "Females" (TVT)
- Jungle Brothers**, "Jimbrowski" (Idlers)

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UNDERGROUND

Column by
Byron Coley

There are precious few rock 'n' roll jerks who know how to wipe their own asses. As a consequence, there are fewer than few who go on to be legends. One of the most deserving to have made this leap into eternal flamehood is a brain-melting Texan named **Roky Erickson**. As the lead throat for the Spades and then the 13th Floor Elevators, Roky sent a roaring arrow of pure vocal force into the pineal gland of American teenage drug culture. Had he done nothing but write and record the monstrous "You're Gonna Miss Me," his name would be carved somewhere.

He's done a whole ton of other stuff, however, and if you want to know about it you can write to Jack Ortman (c/o 504 W. 24th St., Austin, TX 78705) and ask about *The Roky Erickson Story*. This Brobdingnagian, continually updated volume is Jack's attempt to collect everything ever written about Roky. The last version I saw was over 300 pages, so you can see why I don't wanna go into too many details. There seems to be a real glut of Roky's records around these days though, so maybe I could kinda help sort 'em out.

I won't bother with many words on the Elevators' regular releases, which have been showing up as quasi-legitimate Greek imports of questionable quality. Suffice to say that the first two—*The Psychedelic Sounds of...* and *Easter Everywhere*—are among the finest rock albums ever made. The following two—*Live and Bull of the Woods*—are far less essential. This long-defunct band's discography has been expanding lately too, thanks to the Texas Archive label (P.O. Box 17132, Austin, TX 78760), which has collected two LPs of Elevators material from the vaults.

The first of these, *Fire in My Bones*, has six awesome live tracks from a Dallas teen show in '66 plus an interview and a side of studio stuff. Hearing Tommy Hall explain how he came to play the electric jug is worth the price of admission, but then, so is the wild alternative version of "Monkey Island." For that matter, the jam on "She Lives" with fellow Texas legends Conqueroo is worth the price too. So don't dither. The second album, *Elevator Tracks*, features



Courtesy of Realfest/Pink Dust

another batch of studio remainders (notably a great new song called "I Don't Ever Want to Come Down") and a side recorded live in Houston in 1966. The recording levels on this are sorta odd, but I can never get enough of the young Roky, and Clementine Hall's vocals on "Everybody Needs Somebody" will make you think of a young Joplin on psychotropics. Primal punch.

Following his stint in the Elevators, Roky spent time in Rusk State Hospital as the result of a pot bust. After a couple of abortive attempts to re-form the Elevators, Erickson struck out on his own. A partial documentary of his first solo work (ca. 1975) just appeared on an amazing compilation called *Gremlins Have Pictures* (Pink Dust). Culled from half a dozen sources,

Gremlins presents a full picture of Roky's abundant talents. From the psychotically paranoid acoustic Dylanisms of "Warning (Social and Political Injustices)" to the nose-flattening dunt of "Before in the Beginning," this shows many sides of a truly atomic brain.

Also jake in a non-dink way is *I Think of Demons* (Edsel import). This is a remastered version of the 1980 CBS album, *Roky Erickson and the Aliens*, with two non-LP singles added, and it's a beautiful chunk of shrieking heck. Roky's glottals link figurative arms with the meta-heavy axism of Duane "Bird" Aslaksen's guitar and the hyperelectric mania of Bill Miller's autoharp (Miller being a vinyl-clad manster every bit as weird as Roky himself).

After the Aliens dropped from

sight, Roky hooked up with an Austin trio named the Explosives, and an English live album recorded at two of their shows in late '79 has been released as *Casting the Runes* (5 Hours Back import). It doesn't showcase space-age recording techniques, but Roky's singing is strong, his extemporaneous lyrics about Altamont and Charlie Manson are riveting, the liner notes by the Savage Pencil are boss, and the guitar of Cam King (more recently with Divine Horsemen) will easily light your tunnel.

Another live item is the 12" EP cut with Evil Hook Wildlife ET. in 1983 for Live Wire Records (P.O. Box 1222, Santa Fe, NM 87504). This includes seemingly foreshortened versions of a bluesy original called "The Beast" and a thudding arrangement of the Velvet Underground's "Heroin," both of which entered Roky's live repertoire during his days with the Explosives. Neither track is of the highest caliber, but they're the sole evidence of his recent concert work.

In 1984 Roky got together with Texas wiseguy Speedy Sparks and cut some tracks for Dynamic Records that ended up as a French mini-LP called "Clear Night for Love" (New Rose import). The playing on this is basic bar-root, but the sound is as gritty as pumice and Roky sounds just as rippin' on the ballads (like the remake of his classic Holly pastiche, "Starry Eyes") as he does on metal-chewing ravers like "Don't Slander Me." Far more than decent.

Next came Roky's least satisfying effort ever, *Don't Slander Me* (Pink Dust). This was purported to be a further result of the Dynamic sessions, but it's actually a bland, bored set of tunes played by a couple of Aliens (Duane and Bill) who should have known better and some other guys (like Jefferson Airplane's Jack Casady) who shouldn't have.

On a completely different track is a new French LP called *The Holiday Inn Tapes* (Fan Club import), which was recorded in a motel room with a portable recorder in December 1986. Running through a coupla Buddy Holly tunes, one of the Elevators' later benders, "May the Circle Remain Unbroken," and new ones like "The Singing Grandfather," Roky sounds as tenuously together as ever. It's designed primarily for aficionados, but if you sample judiciously from the above noted works you'll wanna hear it. The liner notes say that Roky's none too keen to get back in the studio either, so it may be a while 'til the next glut. I suggest that you catch up now.

The most well-known "outsider" of the Brit rock underground is **Syd Barrett**. After naming Pink Floyd and leading it to early victories, Syd retired in a cloud of sizzling

synapses, emerging only to record two wonderfully bent solo LP's in '69 and '70. Syd's influence has remained crucial on the nuevo-psych front, however, and Alan Duffy has assembled a compilation called *Beyond the Wildwood—A Tribute to Syd Barrett* (Imaginary import), whereon a number of comparative youngsters cover various portions of the Barrett songbook. A couple of the selections are a bit too reverential, but the best ones (by the T.V. Personalities, SS-20, Opal, and the Soup Dragons) extend their forefather's vision into the blood-gut of smell-confoundment. Altogether, a super-pleasing whiff.

As texturally complicated as a steel wool doughnut hidden deep in a dog's liver, the new LP by Japanese power-woman **Tenko** is filled to the rim with off-kilt energy and skronk-vocal surprises. Recorded in New York with Fred Frith, Arto Lindsay, Tom Cora, and Wayne Horvitz, *Slope/Gradual Disappearance* (Rec Rec import, available through Rift, P.O. Box 663, New York, NY 10002) marches the unwitting listener through hallways both profane and near-sacred. Some cuts, like "The Time Drawers," send cello, tubular bells and Indian banjo sneezing around Tenko's vocals like sodden, futurist Druids wrapping a kidnapped monarch in hot tinfoil—most of the other pieces are less describable. Of particular note are the two guitar-trio selections (featuring

Tenko/Frith/Lindsay), which offer urking slabs of world-class paramartial dissonance. Like a well-deserved jab in the park, this is just your cup.

Cecil Taylor's new album, *For Olim* (Soul Note import), is the most graspable record the pianist has cut since 1981's *Fly, Fly, Fly, Fly, Fly* (PA USA). Recorded live in Berlin, the music is broken up into segments short enough for even a college student to handle. More than anyone else, Taylor uses the keyboard's entire range, lunging into ferocious flurries of rock-hard bass-clef finger-pound, then backing up and letting loose with densely ornate handfuls of romantic content. Listening to him go nonstop for an entire LP side can be overwhelming. Playing solo, as he is here, Taylor's improvisational skills and majestically alinear progressions transcend the confines of genre (jazz, free, classical) and come across as the technically brilliant extensions of a soul bursting through a piano. And like I said, even comparative sissies could figure out this one.

Gregg Turner is best known as the demi-lord of Los Angeles's long-lived psychotic reaction, the Angry Samoans. Gregg has another, more cuddly side, though, as is ably demo'ed on *The Mistaken's* eponymous debut EP (Bad Trip, P.O. Box 34629, Los Angeles, CA 90034). It is packed with virtually non-ironic flower-as-drug-as-love lyrical

mumbo, set over a loudly complex guitar shake and a simply-spun folkster beat. Sounds like a dudly combo I know, but the wooly trio (with guest jerk Mike Saunders) pull the hybridized action together like so much acid-laced Play-Doh. You can eat that stuff, y'know. Anyway, there are five fine originals, two covers (the Velvet Underground's anthem of personal liberation, "I'm Set Free," and an updated rewrite of P.F. Sloan's "Eve of Destruction"), plus more thinly masked mind-toxins than a square could handle. It's a good thing you're such a beatnik.

Most of the baby-puke that's been passed off as rockabilly these last few sad, lean years is barely even rock 'n' roll. And one thing it definitely is not is the snarl of uncorked hillbillies looking for meat. Thankfully, there are a few exceptions to this—folks operating outside of the accepted fruitit standard. When they're plowing 'billy turf, Tav Falco and Hasil Adkins are two guys who certainly bugger this convention. Another is **Charlie Feathers**. Feathers is a monumental tough whose trail leads from the Sun Records echo pit straight into the unblinking now. Copious proof of Charlie's undulled edge is splashed all over his first release in many moons, "New Jungle Fever" (New Rose import). This mini-LP compiles three singles that Charlie recorded at home over the last few years and it vibrates like a dying chicken stuck on a car aerial. Rather

than belly over into whalish pseudo-pop the way some of his contemporaries did, Charlie consumed other trash elements (Southern-style soul, swamp water, corn whiskey, etc.) and spat them out into his own stylistic smudgepot. His smoking lowballed version of Arthur Crudup's "That's All Right, Mama" is a guerilla assault on Graceland's false front, and everything else on this baby's been pistol-whipped into congruent shape. If you wanna know what America's true belly sounds like when you rub it, you'll wanna know this.

In terms of pure violence, **Amor Fati's** last opus may have been a bit tougher, but there's no dodging the power of his new album, *Against Nature* (Flesh, P.O. Box 5040, N. Bergen, NJ 07047). Especially in light of the Swans' apparent turn toward "Up with People"-style boosterism, this one-man army stands at the forefront of world-class sonic disrupters. Unlike the rash of dull industrialists who spread across the globe in the wake of Throbbing Gristle's art-virus, Amor Fati combines post-Reich thought-gush with a fat ass-load of disturbing-yet-recognizably-musical blattage. Snippets of this LP could be sliced out and compared favorably to Foetus, Big Black or the later Swans. Taken as a whole, however, the album is an obviously unprecedented crush of moral reality and surging, dystrophic sump amplification. Played at pet-maiming volume, it's a profoundly unnerving experience. Up to it?

New Zealand record of the month is the new 45 by the **Jean-Paul Sartre Experience**, "I Like Rain/Bo Diddley" (Flying Nun import). Pleasant almost to the point of panty-waistedness, this little silk-screened honey whispers its spell like a thick-lidded shoebox full of optimistic Lilliputians. Especially hep is the original tune named after Ellis McDaniels. The JPSE twist harmonica, multi-tracked vocal yips and that patented Diddley guitar stroke into a bottom comprised of that similarly protected Diddley drum beat. The result is pretty blissful, so maybe they're high on crack. Whatever, if your friends make fun of you when they espy you shuffling around the living room whilst this plays on the box, just grab your hockey stick and teach 'em a lesson. Okay.

Should you have any non-homemade-cassette releases that are up to any of these pars, drop them into the nearest mailbox immediately. My address is P.O. Box 301, W. Somerville, MA 02144.



Opposite page: Roky Erickson. This page (L-R): Amor Fati and Vandal-X.

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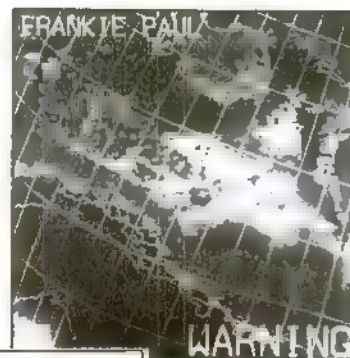
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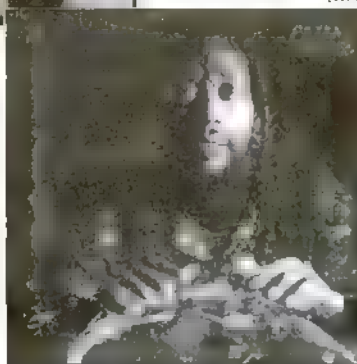
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Jack Kerouac was a writer. That is, he wrote. Many people who call themselves writers and have their names on books are not writers and can't write, like the bullfighter who makes passes with no bull there. The writer has been there or he can't write about it. And going there, he risks being gored.

—William Burroughs,
Remembering Jack
Kerouac

For whatever it's worth, and it's probably not worth much, a grouchy inner voice assures me I am such a beast: a writer. An absurd, perverse pursuit in the short run as well as the long, the activity, the solemn goddamn task of writing is not only as arduous, as tedious, as working in a coal mine—it's as dangerous. Eschew protective gear and you're looking for trouble. Writing can kill. It's killed one out of every three writers—of the true, coal-colored stripe—whom I've known in this life.

Well, yes, all I've really ever known have been three: myself and Nick Tosches, still quite alive (thank-you) and kicking, and the most woefully self-destructive human I have ever met, Lester Bangs. A strong case could in fact be made that Lester, an urn of ashes since '82, was not kilt by "writing"—that rock 'n' roll (presumably as Lifestyle), or drugs, or a specific drug (said the coroner: Darvon), or some combination thereof, did the trick.

It has even been contended that his death was strictly, and merely, a tragic "accident": an aspirin substitute (in a body that had "turned a corner" on its own disintegration) on top of the flu. "I've always believed," says Greil Marcus in his intro to the newly released *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, a nearly 400-page collection of some of Lester's finer work, "that the violence of his attempt to change his life left his body shaken, vulnerable to even the slightest anomaly, be it a commonplace bug or an ordinary dose of anyone else's everyday painkiller; that he had shocked his system toward health and that that



Robert Bayley

was what killed him."

Among Lester's closer cronies, especially those of us who directly witnessed those initially promising, yet ultimately fruitless, final months of the big oaf's gallant attempt to save his own life, this has indeed, for the past five years, been the prevailing—at least a prevailing—view. With minor modifications, I've generally, until now, had no problem with it. Reading this hefty volume of stuff, however, I have to reject it as fortuitous Romantic claptrap; as knee-jerk revisionism of the sorriest sort. How, *knowing Lester*, we

could've even momentarily bought such horseshit is beyond me. After giving him as thorough a read as I can bear I'm convinced his death was no accident, and that poor Lester's "body" (or its alleged health) was hardly the culprit. What killed Lester was Lester. Lester wanted, meant, intended to die. No, I take that back. Want or not, it makes no diff. Lester, writer, fully in control and command of the Lester system, had exhausted all life options for Lester, sentient being, making it functionally impossible for any and all Lesters to continue to live.

Lemme see if I can 'splain it.

In 1965/66, when I first started writing about rockroll, it wasn't as if I could just as easily have been writing "about" something, anything, else. I wrote from it as much as about it; it was the first real writing I ever really did, and whatever it was (or wasn't) it was certainly far less "writing" than just basically an urgent round of expression/spew re the only thing, in my realm of experience, that seemed to merit such urgency. Rockroll was the whole fucking universe. Or a pretty close approximation. (For a heady dose of exactly such Rock-as-Universe brouhaha, check the Dennis-Hopper-digs-Roy-Orbison scenes in *Blue Velvet*: candy-colored clowns—dicksters of some shitty little song!—as All.) By 1969/70, when the young freight train Lester joined the rockwrite fray, it was barely the state of Rhode Island.

This hardly subtle shrinkage in the damn thing's import and oompah—coupled with its simultaneous mega-expansion as "product"—presented problems for Lester, problems for me, problems for the whole dang (ever-expanding) rockwrite crew. What most of the crew, especially its newest recruits—wide-eyed, earnest, and employed as they were by mags whose sole source of publishing to-do was a steady supply of record-company adverts—*did* was simply ignore the fact of shrinkage. Get on the mailing lists, listen to everything, write good reviews, bad reviews (though mostly good reviews)—in any event, *reviews*. Affirmations of the ongoing viability of etc.

Neither Lester nor I could hack even a trial run-through of so chickenshit hand-as-dealt a solution. Me first, what I did was (more or less) listen to nothing, sell every promo album that came my way (mentioning this every chance I got), dash off daily/weekly quotas of "reviews" and whatnot on the basis of having eyeballed various LP covers (if even that), always looking for ways to shuffle in fragments of attempted literature from around my apartment, unexpurgated bulk text from the backs of cereal boxes, grocery lists,

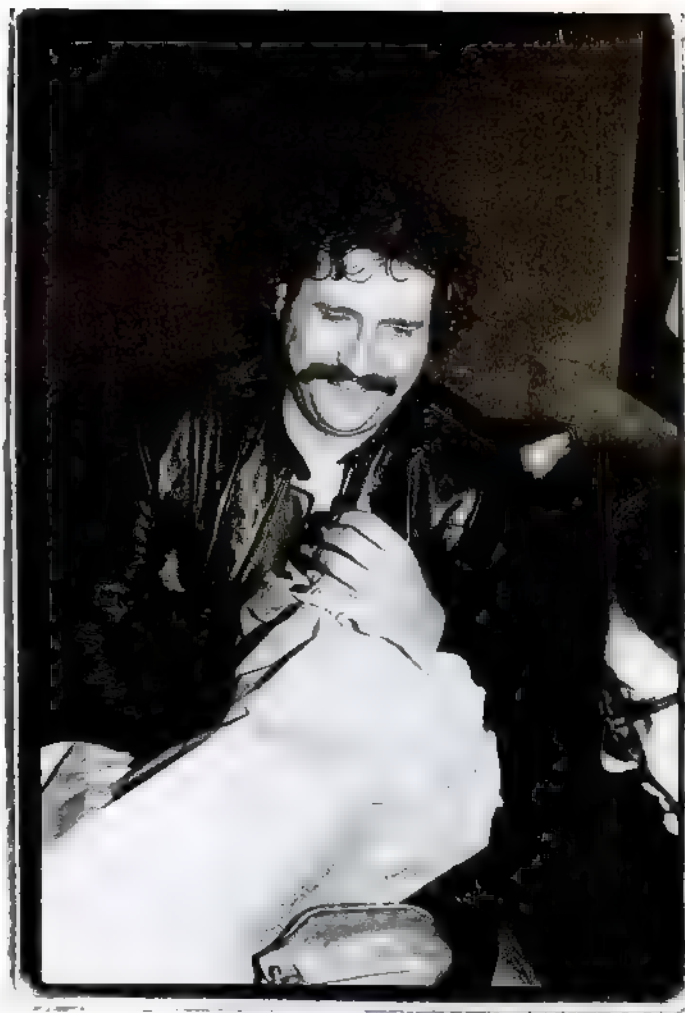
By Richard Meltzer

gratuitous scattergun rants about this, that, and the other (only occasionally straining for ad hoc topical relevance to the album or issue at hand)—in a word, hoot up my sleeve, broadcast my abject contempt for the food tube of the music industry, and “invent” Dada Rockcrit in the process. What Lester did to voice his contempt was climb a horse, climb a tree, a box, a ladder—whatever was available—and yell, scream at the top of his lungs, demanding, insisting that this lame but still sacred fugger, this former Entire Universe, by golly, take drastic steps to keep from sinking further (ever further) in the mire.

You could, if inclined, label my act an “abandonment” of the rockroll monster, and Lester’s a not-unconditional “continued embrace” of same. I just couldn’t see things getting too much better; Lester wasn’t so sure. By the fall of ’70 I was doing pieces on such nonrock subjects as boxing and comic books—lucky for me I had other hobbies. Lester was never so lucky. To his dying day, unless you count rock and drugs as separate—and throw in his final avowed “hobby,” Humanist Compassion—the man had no interests per se in this here life but rock rock rock (and roll). None!

Which is sad, *Christ* it’s sad; and as you thumb through this collection, sequenced more or less chronologically, you catch stage after stage, incarnation after incarnation, of Lester’s ever-expanding disappointment with a Sole Interest which, try as he may, can’t manage to ever quite wise or measure up. I mean, geez, first piece in the book (June ’71) and he’s already half-laughing, half-crying, ‘bout the ultimate fate of garage rock: even the junk had by then been debased! For every in-the-flesh Slade there would be eleventeen fleshless Bowie albums, and imagine this flesh/blood ne’er-say-die’er actually *listening* to all ‘leventeen before discovering something provisionally “good” (p. 161) on David’s *twelveteenth*. (Maybe Marcus, who selected all this stuff, sees such discovery as “life-affirming”; I see it as tiny compensation for all the wear and tear to the poor buzzard’s finely tuned shit-detector up to that point.) Imagine, further, this grizzled rock-war veteran’s *astonishment* (Dec. ’77, p. 252) at a Clash roadie beating on a fan; ya mean punk rock—gulp—’s no different from rock?!?! And imagine, most excruciatingly of all (’78, p. 267), anyone of one-tenth Lester’s mettle using (and being sorrowfully aggrieved by!) Richard Hell as a touchstone for *anything* . . . what a sad fucking joke.

For Lester, more than for any other true believer covering this shit, the rock pickings began lean and they got



Lester Bangs's days already numbered, he undertook the chore of unwriting his own life.

leaner, offering him progressively far more torture than nurture, as meantime all these sideline jerks (“colleagues” as well as readers, goody-two-shoed academicians as well as one-trick pukesters from hell) awarded him gold stars, platinum stars, ostensibly for continuing to visit (and thus legitimize, even though he progressively loathed it), the same rock cesspool as they, ‘stead of *purple hearts* for his daily doses of shrapnel to the heart and nuts, his performance of a (hardly essential) service which *hurt him far, far more than it possibly could them*.

Never one to leave lean enough alone, Lester ultimately couldn’t even let his personal gods (Iggy, Lou Reed, et al) endure, hounding the bastards, cracking makeshift whips as they hobbled on assorted cultural/occupational gimps, finally playing themselves out even in *their own*

terms, leaving *himself* with zero means of life-support (he certainly didn’t look to food for sustenance!) but lingering echoes of the Myth of Lester. Which he proceeded, as with the Myth of Rock, to dismantle/destroy/“deconstruct” with extreme-is-not-the-word prejudice. His days already numbered—and I’m not talking “physically”—he undertook the chore of unwriting his own life.

Not consciously, of course. And not as effectively, perhaps, as in any of his previous missions of note. There was a good deal of sloppiness, tentativeness, indecision; had his focus been clearer, his aim willfully truer, he’d never have made it to 33. But, c’mon, there was probably more *violence* in Lester’s “post”-self-destructive mode than in his non-post at its most arch-brutal, and the semi-unwitting easy target was, whoops, a too-vulnerable, already drastically

weakened Lester himself. Bully-boy masochism, Jim! (Heck hath no fury like the wrath of Lester, self-directed, self-contained.)

He no longer let himself get away with *dick*, and double-ditto for “us.” Us? Well, hey, I’m not exactly sure—the extended “Lester family”? A contempo-fallen huddled mass of, I dunno, quasi-like-minded unreconstructed scenewarts and sillysillies? In any event, a heap of sufferin’ cartoon humanity as absurdly fat-targeted and ill-defined as the unforgettable “them” of pathetic hippie yore. Lester the Great Moralizer (who has easily copped the lion’s share of *posthumous* Lester awards) (the sickest of posthumous Lester jokes!), the first Lester more righteous than right, was an evolutionary development that served no one, least of all Lester.

Lester as Auditioning Saint, for as long as he lived to strut it, was a number, in fact, which never quite managed to ring true. Forget how splashingly the bombastic Young Lester would’ve *pissed* on this as so much sham ‘n’ pomposity, ignore what a crummy done-with-mirrors version it was of the eternally bitchy/cranky Lester the High-Horse Complainer—the whole thing was simply never as existentially one-to-one with any *actual* Lester-of-the-moment as it was with his role-play de jour. So divorced was it from any experiential “reality,” so devoid of concrete “content” (that he could, as needed, pull off an actual shelf), that, like Li Po drowning in the moon’s wet reflection, he ultimately couldn’t take it to any earthly bank but that of his own nonbeing. Saints are *dead people*, dig?

Okay, let me can the metaphor. In Lester’s Final Act, a frigging neophyte was left minding the store. Aside from making for a page or ten of lousy literature (pages whocareswhy-namethem) (and I don’t think they’re lousy, though I bet he would), something dying Real Writers are entitled to leave around their squalid apts. for the editorially minded to snatch and subsequently print, the real-writer decision (by one whose adult life had theretofore been *animated* by and from some comball Writing Central) to entrust an untried phantasm (Good Boy Lester) whose experience (or lack of it) placed him/it light years from the center-of-gravity of etc. with the keys to his writerly kingdom, his goddam writerly persona, was hardly likely to thereby *illuminate* (or significantly prolong) the remainder of his damn-fool days, to keep him from taking the inevitable handful of 14th Street Darwin for a lousy cold.

And I loved him and sorely miss him and this silly book don’t mean SHIT.

MUSIC IN ACTION

THE PMRC -- MORE TROUBLE THAN YOU THINK!

To date, the PMRC has scored some stunning PR coups. They've lined up congressional members, the PTA and the American Academy of Pediatrics as part of their "coalition." These alliances give the impression that the experts who should know -- pediatricians and the PTA -- confirm the claims that music is damaging the children of America.

To a lot of people in our industry, the PMRC doesn't seem like a real threat. After all, we have a First Amendment. But pressure groups like the PMRC in 1921 mounted a headline-grabbing media campaign claiming that the film business was riddled with sex and perversion. The coverage crippled the film industry, cut boxoffice revenues in half, and forced the creation of the Hayes Board, which censored films for more than forty years. We had a First Amendment then too.

Those of us who care about music need to show that the PMRC does not represent the American majority. One way to do it: sign the petition below!

This petition will be presented to the FCC, the Justice Department, and other governmental agencies currently being swayed by the PMRC.

Simply signing your name and sending in this page may help ensure that you can hear the music you enjoy as easily tomorrow as you can today.

I want to state my support for American freedom.

I believe in the American Constitution and its Bill of Rights. I object to the attack on freedom of expression being mounted by groups attacking rock, rap and pop music. I oppose pressure tactics being used by groups like the PMRC and Decency In Media to get the FCC to remove music the leaders of these groups dislike from the air.

I oppose laws -- like the one in San Antonio, Texas -- that prevent some people from attending concerts city officials don't care for. I object to the arrest of an 18-year old store clerk in Calloway, Florida for selling a rap record. And I object to the arrest of bandleader Jello Biafra in California for selling material "harmful to minors" when that material was a reproduction in his album of a piece of art shown in gallery exhibits all over the world.

I may not like every form of music, but I believe it all has a right to exist. That freedom is what America is about.



ANGEL HEART

The Making of Lisa Lisa

PROLOGUE (A HYMN)

Ours is a song that begins at the end, for like all theogonies, our story is already fulfilled. All that remain are the respective probabilities for comedy and tragedy, and in speculation we are not interested. Ours is the story of a birth.

It begins, fulfilled, on the sidewalk outside Radio City Music Hall, with an oracular riddle. "Hot pretz, hot pretz," speaks the voice of commerce, a voice which knows little English and no superfluity. "Leesaleesa." When the riddle is solved, our tale will be complete.

Ours is the story of a birth, but it is more than that. It is a story of generous breasts, of large, almond eyes and muscular thighs, of housing projects and animal sacrifice, innocence and need. It is a story of Nautilus bodies and natural fur headbands, of Jheri curls, of a poker hand, a royal flush, painted on the crotch of a man's pants. It is a story of a Jewish manager and black musicians—but that belongs to another mythology. Mostly, this is a story about money.

It is the story of Lisa Velez, a Puerto Rican teenager from Hell's Kitchen who, blessed with modest beauty and singing skills, became Lisa Lisa, one of the world's biggest pop stars. And it is the story of the men who helped her do it.

But back to the telling. Within yards of the unheeded oracle, three clues disguise themselves as parts of a stage show, silent

accomplices in the seduction of spectacle into pleasure. The first comes to us as sound: when the audience begs the opening act, Exposé, for an encore, the public address system blasts instead the new album by Full Force, Lisa Lisa's songwriters, producers, and comanagers.

The second clue comes as light: a large disc, segmented into geometric fields of color, hangs over the stage, suspended by a similarly proportioned band. As the house goes dark, the disc alone remains lit. It is a giant Swatch watch.

And the third clue comes as gospel, punctuated by our (parenthetical) complicity. Dressed in a black leather jacket, stretch pants, and Swatch knit miniskirt, Lisa Lisa addresses the crowd. *Does everybody feel good? (Yeah!) Fellas, I want you to listen, and listen closely. I'm gonna dedicate this next song to you. (Woof woof woof) Now my favor to the ladies—ladies, check out the fellows next to you. Check this out. (Tentative female screaming) I am gonna bring all you men down off your high horses. (Wild female screaming) Wait a minute. I hear a couple of boos out there. (Serious booing) You know, the guys don't know—I like when they boo me. (They do) I like when the guys boo me. (They do again) Because it pisses me off and makes me work hard! (Intense female screaming) You see—what!? Take off my jacket!? If that's what you came to see, the exits are*

that way. (Female screaming, male laughter) You see, I woke up one Sunday morning and I found my mah was not there beside me. (Shrieking and barking) What was going through his mind I don't know because I did everything possible a real woman could do for her man. (Hysteria) And ladies, I know y'all know what those things are. (Affirmation) Let me remind you: I cooked, I cleaned, and I slaved for this one man. (High-pitched roaring, as she grinds her hips to demonstrate just how she slaved) And I did not waste any of this. (Shrieking) You see you gotta know something about me: I'm not a cat—I don't have nine lives to waste on a man. (Feverish shrieking) I did everything for this man. I gave him everything. I gave him mind. I gave him body. (Whoa!) And I gave him soul. (Rising screams) You see, I said to this one guy three words: I love you. Oops. You see once a man finds out that you love him, he will think that he has you wrapped around his little finger. (Screaming) Let me tell you, this was one of those guys that had to wake up every morning, look in the mirror, and make sure he was still a man. (Female screams of recognition) Well sweetheart let me remind you of something: I know. I chose you. (More screaming) And when I said I loved you, I meant it through and through. No I meant it through... (Whoa!, as she grinds her hips)...and through... (Whoa!!)...and

Article by John Leland

Photograph by Ebet Roberts



Eber Roberts

through—every inch (Whoa!!!) of the way. And I sure as hell think he should have appreciated that. (Male and female screams) But that's okay, because everybody learns from their mistakes. And as of now, I don't put up with that shit no more. (Wild female screaming) You see I'm not here to preach, because I know everybody out there's been through it. The only thing I aim for is to open your eyes and make you realize that shit! we are human too. (More of same) I have nothing against a so-called man, especially when I have him in the palm of my hand. (Shrieking) Hey, let me tell you something: there are some women out there that like to get up and go, walk out on your sweetheart. I praise you. These are the type of women that wake up every morning and say to themselves hey, a man can do it, so can I. (Explosive female screaming) This goes for everybody, male and female: Wake up in the morning and have one attitude about life. Say to yourself, ain't nobody out there gonna take control of my life. (Yeah!) Look in the mirror and say to yourself, there is no one out there better than me

but me! (Pandemonium).

The oracle consulted, the clues in place, we begin now our odyssey.

ODYSSEY

In her private dressing room in the back of the Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam tour bus, Lisa does her best not to fill out a pink Swatch sweater and black miniskirt, but even her best is to no avail. Here, as she frowns at a particularly womanish image of herself on a promotional poster, she wears no makeup; shocks of purplish tinted hair spurt upward from a pink plastic cone on the crown of her head.

SPIN: What do you call that cone thing?

LISA LISA: I don't know, a barrette, I guess.

Lisa tosses a stuffed teddy bear onto a pile of others and curls her knees up beside her on the couch. Across from her, beneath the VCR, a wooden block carries a small, T-shirted teddy and the first of our

story's written messages:

I LOVE YOU IN BIG WAYS

I LOVE YOU IN SMALL WAYS

I LOVE YOU NOW

AND I'LL LOVE YOU ALWAYS

Lisa Velez was born in Hell's Kitchen in January 1967, the youngest of ten children. Her mother, who had dropped out of the sixth grade when her own mother died, supported the family by babysitting.

"My father was gone way before I was born," Lisa says. "I don't like talking much about him, because he's gone. I never had a father, I don't know what it is to have a father. It doesn't bother me at all. I have men that I trust, but they're not fatherly figures, 'cause I've never had a father."

Lisa learned to speak Spanish at home, and English at school. "I was always a chunky little kid," she remembers, "but as I got into elementary school, I started to get thinner. But then when I got into junior high school, I started to get really big. I started to show."

"I started to really show when I was about eight years old. I was scared. It was really embarrassing. I was the only kid in the school that had tits, and that had an ass, and I got my period when I was eight years old. My mother freaked out. She was like, 'You're only eight years old!' I thought, 'Mom, I'm eight years old but I have big tits, what's the problem? What's the difference between having big tits and having my period?'"

"All the other little girls used to look at me like I was crazy and say, 'Gee, you don't belong here, you belong up there with all the other big women, you have all this.' And I used to be like, 'But no, I'm your age, I wanna be your friend.' They used to call me names, like Chesty, called me Buffalo Butt. I psyched myself into thinking that they were just jealous that they didn't have it and I did."

SPIN: Do you get a lot of hecklers at your shows?

LISA LISA: I always get hecklers. That's part of my show, anyway. That's why I have that line, "If that's what you came to see, the exits are that way." It's routine now, I always remember to say it onstage.

SPIN: When did you start saying it?

LISA LISA: When I started getting interviewed, they started questioning me about how I felt about being a sex symbol. I don't want to be known as a sex symbol. It's cute to use it onstage every now and then, because it catches the audience, and you like to have fun. But I want to be known as a singer, as a performer. I don't want people to take me for, "Oh, she's got big boobs."

SPIN: What happened with that heckler last night?

LISA LISA: She was just bugging me. One good thing about me is that I'm good at getting back at people. Which is something bad to think about, 'cause I don't think anybody in life should get back at anybody. But it's also a way to have fun onstage. She was pointing at me and saying, "Come here, come here, I don't like people like you, I'll kick your ass, you ain't shit." I said, "I'm not gonna waste my time with shit like you," and walked away. But I got her really good, did you see? I got a gallon of water, poured it all over her head. She kept talking shit, so I took the gallon and hit her over the head with it.

On West 51st Street in Manhattan, a neon sign in front of St. Paul's House flashes GET RIGHT WITH GOD in alternation with SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT along the bars of the cross, a scriptural scarecrow for a largely Catholic neighborhood. Growing up in the nearby projects, Lisa sang in the Sacred Heart Church choir, Las Hijas de Maria (the Daughters of Mary), along with her six sisters.

"My neighborhood is very bad," she says. "All the drugs, gangs, crime, everything. The last time I saw a shoot-out was at the school connected right next to my building. The kids in there get crazy and stuff, you know, they get into fights, guns come out. I was looking out the window and I saw them shoot—I couldn't believe it. It was always bad."

Her brother and bodyguard Raymond Lopez, who is 17 years older than Lisa, played timbales, congas, and saxophone with Latin musicians like Willie Colón, Hilton Ruiz, Hector Lavoe. "They lived right on my block," he remembers. "This was in the Bronx. All my friends, they would just play to keep out of trouble, even though we would get in trouble when we was growing up—you know, the usual things, guys would steal cars and go for joyrides. We used to have fruit carts when I was growing up that would come down with a horse, and we used to steal boxes of fruit and just sit on the stoops and eat it."

"When I would play saxophone in the house, my sisters would holler, 'I got a headache, cut that out.' And so I would go to the roof and people would be looking out the window, listening."

"We gave my mother a time. We're still giving her a hard time. After seeing all the things she's done and all she's gone through, you just got to have respect for women. Lisa is like my mother. My mother's influenced all of us a lot. My mother's from the old school, very religious, and in my house you never cursed or anything. You give my mother that respect. Superstar or not, you wash dishes, cook, clean the floors, all of that. And Lisa does. You do your chores or you don't get nowhere or get to go to the big dance, ha ha. It's still true today. All of us, all we think about is my mother. That's our first concern."

SPIN: Did you see the movie *Angel Heart*?

LISA LISA: I saw *Angel Heart*; it's very true. When I saw that movie I was like, 'Wow, I'm not the only one, everybody is going through this shit.' A lot of that shit happens, that devil garbage. I thought it was only in New York—it's everywhere you go. I've seen people walk around with scars, I've seen leftovers.

They say *brujería's* very bad. And it is. If you don't know how to use it, you shouldn't mess with it. And I've seen a lot of it, and I believe in it, because I experienced a lot of it when I was young. My mother's almost like a psychic, she has a second sense.

I don't deal with black magic, and neither does my mother. She just deals in reality and things that are gonna happen. She believes in the next life, and she believes in working with spirits at times, but we don't deal with all that sacrificing garbage, 'cause I think it's all bullshit. We just deal with spirits. To make a long story short, I've been through it, I believe in it, and that's that. I try to keep that away from everybody, like no one has to know about this, 'cause it's nobody's business. Because all it's gonna do is once it comes to you, you're not gonna know about it and it'll catch your ass up.

EKPHRASIS (BROOKLYN)

Our story begins anew behind a white wrought-iron gate, in the right half of a clapboard two-family house in East Flatbush, Brooklyn. Between the quiet of Lennox Road and the new beginning of our story are taped two handwritten warnings, which read:

DEAR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, WHATEVER YOU DO, ALWAYS REMEMBER GOD FIRST
and
WHAT YOU SHARE M-U-L-T-I-P-L-I-E-S, WHAT YOU

GRUDGINGLY KEEP SHRIVELS

This is the house of Lucien George, Sr., and of his wife, Cee Gee, the author of the warnings.

In 1970 Lucien George put his three sons, Brian, Paul Anthony, and Lou, in the family car and drove to the Apollo Theatre on West 125th Street in Harlem. George, a former bandmate of Joe Jackson, the patriarch of the Jackson family, had organized his sons into a trio, printed promotional photographs with the legend THE AMPLIFIERS. MANAGEMENT: LUCIEN GEORGE across the bottom, and booked them into amateur night at the Apollo. The eldest son, Lou, was ten years old at the time.

"He used to whip Brian's ass," Lou remembers, "'cause B didn't like singing a lot. He was lazy, man. And my father used to beat him on the butt and say, 'C'mon, you gotta sing, you gotta do this with your brothers.' And it made him a better person."

Time passed. The Amplifiers returned for three more nights at the Apollo, and performed with Joe Tex, at Tex's own request. Even under the watchful eyes of Lucien George and Cee Gee, adolescence swept down upon East Flatbush. In the halls of Wingate High School on Kingston Avenue, "in the heart of third world Brooklyn," it caught up with Mike Hughes and Brian George. "We were kids growing up," Hughes remembers, "doing all kinds of wild things after school, before school. There's fifteen of us on our block, give or take. These are fifteen guys that just needed something to do with themselves. We did it all. And the funny thing is, none of us smoked, none of us drank, so we just

couldn't sit around getting wasted and lay out. We had to be creative. So we'd run around, beating up other blocks, we'd have parties. We fought with the Schenectady Boys and the 49th Street Boys. They'd be sitting around and we used to run around and fuck 'em up and run. We had nothing to do with ourselves. We'd run up on girls, feeling 'em. It was clean fun, wild, stupid things, just like those movies.

"We were Cult Jam in high school, me and the [George brothers'] cousins, Shy Shy [Clark], Curt-t [Bedeau], and Baby Gerry [Charles]. We were doing parties through junior high school into high school, doing rap music. Always a shoot-out, gotta have your posse around, your boys, your crew. Be in a club, small club, somebody's basement, low ceiling, red light. All the sudden the middle of the floor goes, 'B-boy! B-boy!' Put on [the Incredible Bongo Band's] 'Bongo Rock,' throw splits, crazy things, anything you could think of. We was down, hard. We just talked about women, skeezers, doggin' 'em, fuckin' 'em, this, that, and the other. Only then they weren't skeezers, they were just chicks on it. That's the way it was.

"But as we got older, things got more serious. Kids who were young and bad and it was all fun grew up to be old and bad and it wasn't fun anymore. Friends we know killing people, stuff like that. Now it's like, find a direction, guys."

ECCLESIA (COUNSEL)

As swiftly as she had arrived, slender-ankled ado-



lescence adjusted her garment and left East Flatbush, heading north toward Hell's Kitchen. Lou George, taking no chances, broke southeast to Kingsborough Community College, near Brighton Beach. Here he met Steve Salem, a behavioral science major who lived with his parents in the nearby Italian and Jewish neighborhood of Gravesend.

"We used to hang out together, me, Steve, and this guy named Courtney, two black guys and a white dude. We used to go into the lunchroom and steal cookies, 'cause we didn't have any money. And people used to look at me and Steve like, 'These fucking assholes, they ain't gonna amount to shit.' 'Cause we was in this play together called *Elektra*, a Greek tragedy, and we played Greek gods, and whenever we would rehearse, we'd be fucking up on our lines. They used to laugh at us."

Salem, the head of student activities and president of the student body, booked bands to play at the school. "I went to see Lou play at some club," he remembers, "I think the name of the club was Equus, on like Nostrand Avenue or Church Avenue. They had like gold, shiny clothes, white pants. It was like stereotypical—it was kinda more Las Vegas. They didn't play any originals, it was just a Top 40 bar-band situation, except it was even glitzier, because there was three lead singers, so it was even more choreography."

"They invited me over to their house when I decided to book them, and I remember they told me I was the first white person to eat out of their bowls. I had cereal."

"B started playing the drums around this time, and started jamming with the cousins around the corner. I know his father was really upset about him playing the drums, because he felt the lead singers were the ones who got the attention. He wanted B to be up front with his brothers. At that point the father decided to integrate the band with the singers, and that was where the cousins came in. They formed Full Force. This was in like '78. The father asked me to comanage the group, and I said right then, yes."

"I also told them how much I didn't like the way they were dressed, and that they needed to just bring out their personalities in their clothes."

SPIN: What do you call the father?

STEVE SALEM: I call him Mr. George.

SPIN: What happened at the CBS Expo in Vancouver last summer?

STEVE SALEM: What, did Lisa tell you about that?

SPIN: Uh, not really.

STEVE SALEM: What, did Mike, or you heard a little?

SPIN: What happened?

STEVE SALEM: Catastrophe. They asked us to come to the convention and sing. We said no at first. They told us how important it was gonna be, because people were going to be there from all over the world. We decided, okay, we trusted their judgement.

Lisa came out first, and her sound was atrocious. At this point, "Head to Toe" was just about No. 1 in the country, so everyone was looking forward to something great. The sound was miserable. The band was terrible. Lisa was totally off-key. It was the worst set in life, in front of the worst audience in life, 'cause they were like all these executives with their wives.

Then Full Force came out, and Full Force did their regular show, which includes having a girl come onstage, and they do silly things.

SPIN: What sort of silly things?

STEVE SALEM: Like Lou hugs the girl, Paul comes up from behind the girl and lifts both Lou and the girl up in the air, while Lou swings his legs furiously

like he's pumping the hell out of her. It was a white girl that they picked up and she looked really pretty, and a lot of people I guess didn't appreciate that. I guess they wouldn't have appreciated it if the girl was any color.

We had the girl set up, 'cause it was someone we knew, but she didn't know what she was getting into, and she was kinda mad at us afterwards.

SPIN: Then what?

LOU GEORGE: Okay, we work out, okay? In our show, Paul Anthony does a tasteful . . . not strip-tease, but it has a part where we say, "How many people would like to see Paul Anthony take it off?" And what he would do is take off his shirt, and he'd have his chest exposed.

SPIN: How many people yelled yes?

LOU GEORGE: I only heard women yell yes. Not all women, 'cause they were there with their husbands.

And then we'd say, "Whynchu go all the way, whynchu pull it down?" And what he'd do is, he'd

"Paul Anthony came up to me, and he bent down and kissed me. I thought, 'Oh Jesus, he's gonna rape me now.'"

pull down his outfit, and he'd have posing trunks, that he normally wears when he goes to the gym. And he pulls down his pants and he starts posing. SPIN: Is it true that [CBS Records president] Walter Yetnikoff said, "That's disgusting," and walked out?

STEVE SALEM: That's a rumor. I thought it was true, but then I've been told that it never happened that way. I could have sworn it was true the night it was going on. I was literally told, "Wow, you guys really fucked up." By the end of the night we had just destroyed both bands' credibility.

I called the A&R director in his room. I said, "If you want us off the label, just tell us. If we did that much damage, we're sorry." We went back to the hotel wondering, like, "I wonder how much money we can get from another label now that CBS is gonna throw us off." We thought we'd be rich.

By 1983 or so, Full Force had been turned down by every record company in the industry. "At that point," says Salem, "it was my idea for Full Force to become producers. The idea was that we'd produce a group and put them on a small label—which I never wanted for Full Force to be on a small label. But we could get a little jerk-off deal. It took me about a year to convince them."

They produced a rap single for U.T.F.O. (Untouchable Force Organization), neighborhood friends of Mike Hughes. "It didn't hit," Salem remembers. "B-Fine and myself, we were on the phone one day and we said, 'Let's create a new group.' New Edition was out at the time, so I said, 'They're doing the Jacksons, let's do the Supremes, let's get three girls.' So he went back and wrote 'I Wonder If I Take You Home' and 'Can You Feel the Beat?' And then we started auditioning girls."

"So actually, Lisa was created out of desperation, financial desperation and also trying-to-make-it-happen desperation."

At this time, Lisa Velez, an A student at Julia Richman High School, was singing in the school traveling troupe, and trying to find neighborhood club dates. "I used to do a lot of Motown," she remembers, "and I used to always do some old

things off Broadway musicals."

SPIN: Did you sing love songs before you were old enough to know what they meant?

LISA LISA: Maybe at first. After maybe memorizing all the words, I would think about them, think about what they mean, what's going on. It didn't take long to realize what they're about.

SPIN: Does your audience understand what your songs are about?

LISA LISA: I think nowadays, the kids of this time, they'll know exactly what it is, 'cause it's in their faces, it's thrown right there. Nowadays the kids are growing up so fast that you can just throw one word at them and they'll give you a definition of their own.

"My last year in high school," she continues, "I was working at Benetton, folding sweaters. I was gonna do anything possible to get discovered, that way I could sing. I found out that Madonna was hanging out at the Funhouse, and that's how she was discovered by Jellybean, so I started going to the Funhouse. It was a young atmosphere, no liquor served in that place at all, so I kinda liked it. I used to dance a lot, but I was always aware of where I was turning, so I would watch and find out who's who, where's where."

At the Funhouse she met Mike Hughes, who told her he was looking for female vocalists. "First thing I thought was that she was fine," Hughes says. "She was wearing a pink sweatshirt and jeans. I thought, 'If she can sing as well as she looks, I'm sure they'll like her.'" He asked her to audition for Full Force.

"I told my sister that I wouldn't allow her to sing unless I met the people that were there," says Raymond Lopez. "She went for an audition and told me afterwards. I wouldn't have let her go."

At 9:30 P.M., against the wishes of her brother, 17-year-old Lisa Velez boarded the D train for her first trip to Brooklyn. Mike Hughes met her at the subway station, and the two walked the mile or so to the George house.

"So we go," Lisa says, "and I sit on a stool in the basement, and I'm looking around, and I see pictures of these big, big guys. Six big guys. I'm saying to myself, 'Oh shit, they're gonna kill me.' I didn't know what to think. I had just met Mike. Enter the six big guys, and I almost shit in my pants. Paul Anthony was the first one to come up to me, and he bent down and he kissed me and he says, 'God, you're very pretty.' That's when I thought, 'Oh Jesus, he's gonna rape me now.'"

SPIN: Was Lisa nervous when she came for her audition?

LOU GEORGE: She was very nervous when she came in, and I could tell. But when my brother Paul just gave her a kiss on the cheek and said, "You're very pretty," that kind of eased her up.

Lisa started to sing. "She was singing this song that Mike Hughes wrote for her to do," says Lou George, "and it wasn't kicking at all. It was horrible, plain and simple. Because it had her singing so off-key, because the way the song was written, she was singing all off. I was just laughing until my tears came down because of the fact that she was off and Mike had wrote it, and it was just so funny the way the notes was going. And I was by the bathroom crying in tears, and Lisa couldn't see me."

"Then she sang 'For Your Eyes Only,' and that's what got it. Everything fell into place. But even after that, we didn't stop there, we still auditioned other

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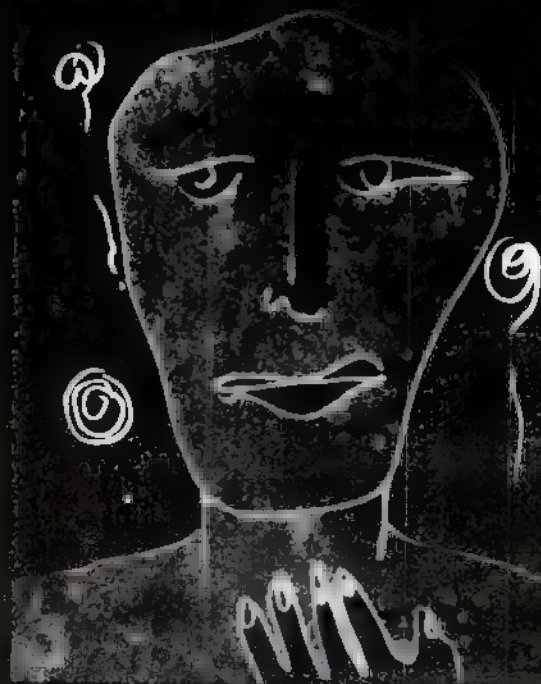
PETER HIMMELMAN



how would you fight if you could fight for the world
would you be steady, would you be rock steady
fight for the world

rebel minds keep in time i say
rebel minds fight for the world

—Peter Himmelman, "Fight For The World"



GEMATRIA

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a.i.d.s.

Words from the Front

The HIV virus is thought to be the cause of AIDS, but there's strong evidence that it isn't. The frightening truth is that no one knows for sure, and few scientists are admitting it. Are precious time, money, and lives being lost while we fight a harmless virus?

HIV is called "the AIDS virus," and medical experts have made it the keystone of their battle against AIDS, building all their efforts to fight the disease around it. But what if they're wrong? According to Professor Peter Duesberg of UC-Berkeley, years of time and millions in research dollars have been wasted on the belief that the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the cause of AIDS. The real cause of AIDS, Duesberg says, is still unknown, and HIV is just a latent, and perfectly harmless, retrovirus that most but not all AIDS patients happen to carry.

"To say that HIV is the cause of AIDS is to cast aside everything we know about retroviruses," says Duesberg, a member of the National Academy of Sciences who has been studying retroviruses for twenty years. The HIV theory, he says, is inconsistent, paradoxical, and absurd—little more than a by-product of a decade-old search for a retrovirus that could be called the cause of cancer.

HIV was hastily postulated as the cause of AIDS in 1984, when a National Institutes of Health (NIH) scientist named Robert Gallo identified it as HTLV-III, the third strain in a family of viruses believed to have originated in Africa. Gallo, who was made director of the National Cancer Institute's search for the cause of AIDS in 1982, was propelled by several provocative links between HTLV-III and the disease. Most strikingly, something was stripping AIDS patients of their protective white blood cells, known as T-cells, and HTLV-III was found to attack these cells.

Gallo was unable to isolate the virus, however, because once it destroys a T-Cell it mysteriously disappears. So he measured its presence by testing for HTLV-III's antibodies. Antibodies were detected in 80 to 90 percent of the AIDS patients tested. With no other plausible cause in sight, Gallo's virus, later called HIV, became "the AIDS virus" and Gallo was soon entangled in a lawsuit filed by the Pasteur Institute in Paris who also claimed to be the first to isolate it. While scientists raced to develop a test that would detect HIV, and people all over the world worried about whether they had been infected, important scientific rules and standards were completely ignored.

One such standard measure, used to determine whether a particular micro-organism is the cause of a disease, is a set of three laws known as Koch's postulates.

The first law says that the suspected micro-organism has to be present in all cases of the disease. HIV is not. Between ten and twenty percent of all AIDS patients show no traces of HIV whatsoever, not even its antibodies. Another law says that the micro-organism must be able to be taken from a host, animal or human, and further spread in pure culture. This cultivation can only be done in 50 percent of all AIDS patients. The third law says that inoculations of pure cultures of the micro-organism into animals must produce in them the same disease. HIV has been injected into thousands of laboratory animals, and not one has developed AIDS.

Peter Duesberg is so convinced that HIV alone cannot cause AIDS, that he told his old friend Gallo that he wouldn't mind being injected with it. His argument is compelling, and he has been waiting for almost a year for anyone in the scientific community to come forward and refute it. No one has. Many won't even speak with him. SPIN did.

SPIN: You have defied the entire medical establishment by claiming that HIV is not the cause of AIDS. What convinces you?

DUESBERG: Koch's postulates were postulated at a time when we couldn't do what we can do now. Now we can detect things at lower concentrations and activities, and we are falling into a trap where we are saying that they are critically relevant. The incidence of [the virus HIV] is so low that Koch would never have seen it. This is what they [today's scientists] are overlooking. That the "AIDS virus" is at incredibly low concentrations and activity. That's why I am saying that HIV can't be the cause of a fatal disease, because it is so inactive. In fact, HIV is found in far more healthy humans than sick humans. This is very embarrassing to many people. They'd rather ignore it.

For a parasite or a virus to be pathogenic, it has to meet three criteria:

One. It must be biochemically active. In other words it must do something to get something done.

Two. It would have to affect or intoxicate more cells of a host, an animal or a human, than the host can spare or regenerate. Stated otherwise, you would only suffer from influenza virus if it kills or infects a significant portion of your lung cells, the polio virus if it gets into your nervous system, or if the hepatitis virus takes hold of a large part of your liver. You wouldn't notice an infection that involves 0.01 percent of your cells. That would be what you would call a latent infection. We all get them. Most of us have a latent tuberculosis infection, for example.

Three. The host must be genetically and immunologically permissive. It has to let it happen, so to speak. It has to accept the pathogen. It cannot be immune to it.

The HIV virus, the so-called AIDS virus, does not meet one of those criteria. For instance, the virus is never active—not only in those who have no symptoms, but also in those who develop full-blown AIDS and die from it. Even in people who are dying of AIDS, the virus is hardly detectable, measured only by locating its antibody. An antibody to a virus is like a vaccination; it has been traditionally, and still is, the ultimate weapon against a virus. It is an indication of a past disease, not of a future disease. If you have antibodies, you should be congratulated. You are safe. You don't have to worry about it anymore. But somehow, they have convinced the public to believe that the disease is yet to come, which really makes no sense; it's absurd. Once the antibody is made, the show for the virus is over. The time for the virus to strike and cause disease is before immunity, not after immunity. That's why vaccination works. Now, that's what we find in the patients. If you look for direct evidence of the virus, there is very little. It is only possible to isolate the virus in 50 percent of the patients.

SPIN: What is the difference between isolating the virus and detecting it?

DUESBERG: Detecting the antibody to the virus is what you can do in 80 to 90 percent of all cases. So, 10 to 20 percent don't even have antibodies. With polio or hepatitis, you can isolate copious amounts of virus. Here, it is different. You have to use techniques which were developed to detect or activate so-called latent viruses, viruses that are not active. It involves taking millions of cells from a host, in the form of tissue culture, an expensive method, and then when they are removed from the immune system of the host, you add some uninfected cells. Then you wait a couple of weeks and hope that

Column by Celia Farber

Illustration by Chris Carroll

during that time, something kisses awake the sleeping beauty, the resting AIDS virus. If one of them in that time becomes active, the whole culture will become infected, because now there is no immune system. By then you have amplified or multiplied the tissue culture enough to detect it in a cell culture, and then you can say "Aha! I have isolated the virus." All you have really done is, out of billions of cells, you have activated at least one virus. But in 50 percent of all AIDS patients, not even that much can be done. Even in millions of cells, you cannot activate one virus. That's how low the viral content is.

For direct biochemical evidence of the virus, we look for the so-called pro-virus, a DNA copy. Biotechnology has developed a technique of detecting one gene in a billion cellular genes. By this method, you find HIV in no more than 15 percent of the AIDS patients. And whatever virus is there is mostly inactive.

So then, HIV is only found in one of hundreds of thousands of cells. And even if the virus does kill those cells, its impact is minimal. The virus takes one or two days to infect one T-cell out of tens of thousands. That's 0.1 to 0.01 of your T-cells. But you normally regenerate about five percent of your T-cells every two days. They die and you get new ones. So the effect of HIV killing the T-cells is like poking a needle in your finger and losing a minute amount of blood every day. It's just totally inconsistent with what we know about that virus that it could possibly explain the depletion of T-helper cells.

There's one more inconsistency—retroviruses need a division in order to replicate. Unlike all other viruses which kill cells when they replicate, retroviruses need the mitosis—the living cell. That makes it very difficult to explain how this virus could be responsible for the loss of T-cells. It is impossible already, on the basis of its inactivity, and the low numbers of cells it infects. Retroviruses like HIV need living cells in order to replicate.

SPIN: How is it possible for the entire scientific community, in the face of a serious epidemic, to turn their backs on scientific dogma and accept, without scrutiny, that this is the AIDS virus?

DUESBERG: It gives a lot of comfort to say here's the virus and this is the cause. If you say who's done it you'll feel much better, even if it's a monster. If you really want to talk about it, there is more behind it. There is a lot of vested interest behind it. Retrovirologists have generated a whole reserve army of people, thanks to the so-called virus cancer program which was generated in the Nixon era. Like polio, we thought, now we'll get rid of cancer.

There is a reservoir of people who have been looking for cancer viruses for the last couple of years and haven't found them. But they really have made names and careers for themselves, and have developed tremendous skills—and I'm one of them. We are the veterans of the virus cancer program, and we are looking for a cause—but we haven't really found one. So you show us a new windmill and we are marching. And that's what's happening with the AIDS virus. I have worked with retroviruses for twenty years and I came more and more to the realization that they are not quite as important as the retrovirologists would have liked them to be.

SPIN: How has your theory been received—or I should say not received—by the scientific community?

DUESBERG: Those who are really direct targets of this—who are working closely with it and making these major claims that HIV is what causes AIDS—have not responded at all directly. And indirectly, well, I know them. Like Bob Gallo, for instance, we

are old friends. I spoke to him two weeks ago, and he said "With friends like you, who needs enemies?" And he literally runs away from me. Usually when you challenge a major hypothesis, you get a rebuttal, but here it's total avoidance. They don't want to talk, they don't want to be seen by me. A few examples: I was at the NIH two months ago, in the same building where Gallo works. We went to the movies, and I said "Look Bob, I really don't believe these claims. I am really convinced now that it can't be so. You have to find another explanation." He's certainly not a shy person, but

"HIV is found in far more healthy humans than sick humans. This is very embarrassing to many people. They'd rather ignore it."

ever since, he just doesn't want to be seen arguing or talking about it with me, not even at a party. There was a party with mutual friends of ours who invited us because they wanted to see us debate it, and he refused to come. We were both invited to a memorial meeting for a colleague. Gallo said, "Is Peter Duesberg coming? Because if he comes, I don't want to come on the same day." It's very strange.

SPIN: If it is not this virus, do you have a theory about what causes AIDS?

DUESBERG: First of all, when we say, what could cause AIDS, we should say, what could cause the multiple symptoms that are now all called AIDS? I think we are doing a major disservice by using that catchy word AIDS. Such divergent symptoms are all disguised under this one term. A lot of things can go wrong when you lose your immune system. They say that the AIDS virus kills the immune system and then you get all these opportunistic diseases. But one of the symptoms of AIDS is dementia, one is Kaposi's sarcoma, another one is lymphoma, or leukemia, or *pneumocystis carinii*, or diarrhea. Some of these are consistent with immune deficiencies. But dementia is not caused by an immune deficiency, and certainly not lymphoma or Kaposi's sarcoma. Tumors are not known to be consequences of an immune deficiency. So, the first thing I would say is that I don't think we are looking at a disease entity. We are not looking at polio, or pneumonia, or hepatitis, or surgical cancer—all defined diseases. We are looking at a bank of old symptoms. Not one of them is new. And I think it is highly unlikely that they are all caused by this virus, particularly in view of how inactive it is.

So, I think we have to go back from the bench to the patient and see what AIDS is in the first place. And once we have a better picture of what AIDS is, we can go back and figure out whether it is caused by a virus or even a germ. I for one doubt that it is even a germ, that is, a contagious agent—something that can be transmitted. Casual contact is not enough to cause this disease. To get AIDS, you need intimate contact, that is, contact that involves the exchange of human cells. Once you have exchanged human cells, you have exchanged as much as you can possibly exchange. And also, it has to be done many, many times before the disease is transmitted. This exchange excludes almost nothing, and it certainly doesn't prove the germ

theory. A virus, by definition, is a "cell-free infection," something that can be transmitted without transmitting cells—from sneezing or towels or whatever.

SPIN: Has there ever before been a virus that depended on the transfer of cells?

DUESBERG: No. All viruses can be transmitted cell-free. The virus can sit and wait somewhere, on a toilet seat or something, or whatever you touch. Some are more difficult than others to transmit, like herpes virus, which you can get by kissing, or Epstein-Barr virus. But that is still not enough for AIDS. Other viruses, like polio, measles, or flu, can be transmitted in a swimming pool—highly cell-free.

SPIN: Do you think AIDS could be caused by environmental factors?

DUESBERG: I think lifestyle has a lot to do with it. AIDS stands for acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and most of us, being so trained to think in biological terms, immediately jump to the conclusion that it must be a virus or a bacteria. But "acquired" doesn't mean it is biologically transmitted. You can acquire lung cancer from smoking cigarettes, and a number of diseases, as well as immune deficiencies, from shooting up heroin, and even from anal intercourse. It's not great for your health to do that every day.

SPIN: But the puzzling question is, why so suddenly? Why are so many people getting sick and dying now?

DUESBERG: There are a few things that can make it look like all of a sudden you have a disease, but it may not be as new as it sounds. One thing is that homosexuality has become acceptable and highly visible. Certainly in places where they concentrate and gain a lot of confidence, like New York or LA, it becomes more obvious. Fifteen years ago, they could have died, and the cause of death would be pneumonia or Kaposi's sarcoma or whatever. Now it is called AIDS. Whatever they were doing, the frequency went up. The drugs had become chic and much more readily available, the bathhouses had become more accessible and the whole lifestyle more concentrated. Once you concentrate it, you see things that you wouldn't see had they been scattered around. The definition of AIDS keeps widening, and now they count almost all infections as AIDS. You see, there is no such thing as a germ that would prefer Rock Hudson over Cheryl Tiegs. I think for a virus, they certainly would look exactly the same. But there is an absolute preference for boys here. [Female] prostitutes have the same number of dates as promiscuous homosexuals, I assume, but they're not getting it [from sexual contact]. There must be something else, something related to that lifestyle.

SPIN: Are there other scientists who are working with theories similar to yours, or are you the first?

DUESBERG: Well, judging from the letters I received, which were mostly from other scientists, there are many who agree.

I did not get one letter that said "You are full of it," or "You're crazy." And I am waiting for it. I would welcome it. I would like to debate somebody who would be willing to challenge me. The editor of *Bio-Technology* called me and said, "I have read your work and heard about you, and I am beginning to believe now that you might be right. Write me an editorial. I really want to bring this out, and see whether or not anybody has a rebuttal." He had spoken to a number of people and never gotten an answer to my question. It's a funny situation. There are a lot of vested interests here. It's very diffi-

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STILL WAYLON

The Outlaw at 50.

"You're gonna get in trouble if I write this."
"I don't care. You write what I tell ya."

Waylon Jennings, looking more like an outlaw biker than a cowboy, is dressed in black except for his nylon racing jacket. His trademark black hat never leaves his head. He turned 50 this year and he looks it. He also looks healthy, if weathered. There is no sign of his 20-plus year addiction to pills and cocaine. He chain-smokes. He's slightly nervous, but becomes more relaxed as the interview progresses.

Waylon is in New York, a city he first visited as one of Buddy Holly's Crickets, to promote his new "audiobiography," an album and one-man show titled *A Man Called Hoss*. His wife, singer-songwriter Jessi Colter, sits quietly at a small table by the hotel window. There are no evident signs of destruction or outlaw behavior in this posh hotel room—even the door is intact. Is this the most notorious, most wanted outlaw in country music?

You're fifty years old now. Are your rough and rowdy days really over?

Well, just when you think they are, they're probably not. You know, I have more fun now. The drug days are over for sure. But me and Johnny Cash are still gettin' mean if we want to.

You've described yourself as an addict. What drugs were you addicted to?

I took pills, uppers, and cocaine. I did pills until cocaine became fashionable. You know, we were a little late getting cocaine in Nashville. I guess I did about ten years of each. Most of the things, you know, and it may have been what kept me alive is that I didn't do a lot of different types of drugs, you know, uppers and downers and all that. I did one type of thing: I always looked for that up thing.

I must have the constitution of ten men, because right at the end I was doin' like \$1500 a day in cocaine. I would stay up, and this was a 20-year ritual, I would stay up until I'd crash and then I'd get up. You know, one of the things that I always bragged about was that I never had a hangover. But the deal was, I never gave myself a chance to have a hangover. Because the minute I hit the floor, I hit the floor doing either pills

or cocaine.

I wasted a lot of years. I wish a lot of things. I could have been a lot more creative. You know, I spent the last five years that I was on drugs—I withdrew completely from people. I spent more time alone sitting in a room with that cocaine bottle in my hand, when I could have been very creative. The thing that I am sorry about the most is, you see, the bad thing about it, if you stop and think about it, and I don't know if anybody's readin' this who is a drug addict... There is something you don't think about, but if you do think about it, if you ever have a chance to sit and think about what you're doin', it's your life, you can destroy it if you want to. But look at the people around you, that care about you; think about what it's doin' to them. You don't have the right to destroy their lives too. And that's what it does. I actually think that it's worse on them than it is on yourself: because they have to sit and watch someone they love or care about destroy themselves. That was one of the reasons that I was able to pull out of it, because I saw it in my wife Jessi's face.

I went out to Arizona, just went out there and leased a house, but I had no intention of quittin'. I was just gonna hole up and get the heat off me a little bit, from everybody around me. But I told Jessi when we went there that in 30 days I'd be back doin' cocaine again and you might as well get ready for that. But I am gonna try and get back on my feet a little bit, get off it and stay off it for thirty days and clean up. But after all the pain, mentally and physically, you know, the first couple of weeks when you're tryin' to pull up from it, it messes with your sleep. So I spent some time alone, I'd wake up at odd hours and I would just go out and sit out at the back of the house. But then I got to seein' my mind clear enough, and seein' what it was doin' to her.

Was there any one thing that made you want to quit?

That was it: what it was doin' to her and my little son, who was about five years old then—between four and five. And you know, his attention span was longer than mine when I was on drugs. He would reach out to me, and I would

be there for a minute... and he knew somethin' was wrong with me, even though he was that little. Now he refers to that time as when Daddy used to cuss. But, anyway, I thought: I want to see him grow up. And I really had no intentions of quitting until I did that, until my mind cleared up and I saw what I was doing, that I was killing people around me, people that were friends of mine. And I was losing everything. You know, the bad thing about it is I had hit bottom. I was a mess. I couldn't even drive a car because I had dizzy spells. I was gonna put it off for two or three months, goin' out there and cleanin' up. But something told me, I remember that much, that I'd better go now.

Why did you start?

Stupidity. It was the thing to do. You hear all the tales about the way Hank Williams was, and the people around me, in the business. You know, pills were the big thing when I came to town. Well, actually, I can't blame that on Nashville, because I got into pills in Arizona. The thing about it is, with pills and cocaine, that when you first start doin' it, you do feel good, you feel wonderful. But you know after you're addicted to that stuff, you get addicted and you start to chasing a feeling that you never get again.

Do you think drugs go with the whole Outlaw image?

No. The drugs came before that. They were actually before that.

How did the Outlaw movement start?

You know what? Let's get that all up front, the way that really was. That was to merchandise and sell records. I remember when they were gonna call that album *The Outlaws*, and I had been called that before because I had an album out called *Ladies Love Outlaws*. But I tell you, I argued against that because there was a group called the Outlaws. A great group, and we probably sold some records on the strength of people thinkin' it was that group, because it says *Wanted: The Outlaws*. I argued with them about it until we were about an inch away from them changing their minds, but it did work out pretty good.

Interview by Gregg Weatherby

Photograph by Alan Messer



Let's get that all up front, the way it really was. The Outlaw movement was to merchandise and sell records.

So the people in that group were you and Willie...

Me and Willie and Tompall Glaser, and of course my wife, Jessi Colter. Now she is about as much an outlaw as Mickey Mouse. As sweet as she is, it's awfully hard to call her an outlaw. But they like to categorize things a lot.

So the whole Outlaw thing was just a marketing tool? There's no big story behind it?

No. No big story behind it. About the closest thing that Willie ever did to bein' an outlaw is that he probably came to town and double-parked on Music Row.

What's your relationship with Willie Nelson?

Relationship! Me and Willie have been friends for 25 years, and 25 out of 30, that ain't bad. Willie and I, we're brothers of the road. We run around together and everything. When we started out, we both had the same attitude toward Nashville and things, and they had the same attitude towards him as they did me. Willie kept goin' back to Texas, and I kept tryin' to hang in there. But Willie and I are great friends. We always will be. He gets mad at me and I get mad at him, but we made a pact a long time ago. Most of our trouble has been caused by people around us, not between me and him. Before we get mad enough to kill one another we'll talk about it first.

I have a Willie Nelson for President bumper sticker.

You do? Well burn that thing. If there's anything you don't want, Hoss, is Willie Nelson to be President. I mean, you don't even want him to be Secretary of—you don't even want him to be dogcatcher.

What's your favorite Waylon and Willie story?

Well, when we were really hot in Texas, before we got hot anywhere else, we were hot in Texas. Now I mean, you might call us stars. Willie picked me and Jessi up at the airport in his new Mercedes. This must be 12 or 15 years ago. We were goin' out to his house, which is out there close to Dripping Springs, and Willie runs out of gas. That's just no problem, I mean, we're in Texas, everybody knows us in Texas. Well, we spent an hour out there, and the people would drive by and wave at us, you know, but nobody would stop. I just couldn't figure that out. And finally, when the Lone Star Beer truck, which sponsored most of Willie's shows, drove by, and the driver hollered, "Hey Willie, Waylon, what y'all doin'," and kept on goin', well, I said, "Wait a minute now, Willie, I'm gettin' tired of this. Me and you might better get in the car and we'll set Jessi out here and get us a ride." We might still be there if Connie, Willie's wife, hadn't happened to come by. I ain't kiddin', we was there over an hour and nobody would stop. They like us, they like our singing, but they don't want us ridin' in their cars with 'em now. They ain't gonna give no hillbillies lookin' like me and him a ride.

Do you really buy your boots in New York City and your hats in New Orleans?

I buy my boots in New York City, at Billy Martin's. It's the only place I can find those sharp toes. I could probably get 'em other places, but I bought about six, seven pair of boots over there. They're Justin boots and they got them sharp toes: them kind that you can get them cockroaches in the corners and smash 'em. You can't buy 'em anywhere else. Whoever saw a cowboy with them round-toed boots?

How did you meet Jessi?

I had been friends with Duane Eddy, and we're still great friends, I call him my husband-in-law. But when I first met Jessi, she was married to Duane. She had written this duet and Duane is from Phoenix and I was living in Phoenix and he asked me if I would sing this duet with her. And I remember that we went down there and they put her on a box beside me. I didn't meet her again until she and Duane were in the process of getting a divorce. She was born in Phoenix, and I was working in a club there and she came out. I asked her if she wanted to go out with me and she says, "Well, call me in a month, when my divorce is final." So then we got together. You know, when I first met her, I didn't like her. She made me madder than anybody in the world. Now I didn't realize it until a few months later, but she did it on purpose. She would do things that aggravated me, because she liked to see that fire, as she called it.

There must have been a lot of women on the road.

Oh yeah, and Jessi's had a lot of things to understand. You know, I've been married three times before. Jessi and I have a very honest relationship. Things I did then I can't change now. It wasn't easy on her. She's probably the only person in the world that would put up with me. In fact, I would venture to say that she is the only person in the world who could have been married to me and stayed with me.

Where is Nashville headed?

I've always noticed that through history, ever since the fifties, when pop and rock 'n' roll music, when it self-destructs, they come back to country for the basics. That's the time when country music has the cross-overs and things like that, the cross-over artists. Well, Nashville is right on the verge of that again. I think pop music and rock music, and looking at these videos, they've gone about as far out as they can go. And it always happens. But Nashville right now is in limbo. They're kinda searchin' for what to do, and that happens all the time. They have a little taste of the cross-over and then they try to cut pop records and try to cut things that will cross over. But if you look back through history, the things that have crossed over have been the most grassroots country things, like "Detroit City" and things like that. But they get what I call pop-itis. They're searchin' right now. I think all music is searchin'. I think it's all in limbo.

Do you think country music is in for another revival period?

I think so. We need another Billy Joe Shaver, or Kris Kristofferson, or somebody like that. Our music is songs. More than any other music, it's the songs and the lyrics and the stories. I think we've been sitting on our lazy butts out there and not writing. But that's what I'm trying to do now. I was on-stage one night and I realized that I was tired of singing other people's songs. I wanted to sing my own songs again, and I wanted to sing something new. I've done some good songs written by other people, but I'm interpreting. That's all it amounts to, and I'm a good interpreter. But that's not what I'm all about. Part of me is writing, too, and the most important part of country music is the writing.

I heard a lot of Texas coming through on A Man Called Hoss. A little Bob Wills...

Oh yeah, a little bit of Western swing, a little bit of fifties rock 'n' roll. When we wrote it, I planned to sing from the beginning to the end of it. Before we even sat down to write the album, I had a list of what I wanted each one of these songs to represent and what I wanted to say. Some of them had titles... all had working titles and subtitles. Like the first one is "Childhood," the second one is "Texas." But I just went through my life, and looked at things that were important turning points in my life and things that happened. The most important things in my life are in this album.

Do you still live in Texas?

No, I live in Nashville. I haven't lived in Texas in thirty years—more than that. But once you're born and raised in Texas, it's just like the song, they'll never take it out of you. I gripe about Texas and west Texas sandstorms because I don't want to hear no shit from nobody else about Texas.

Music is such a big part of everyday life in Texas. Every other house has a guitar or fiddle and somebody who knows how to play it. The big thing on weekends, back when I was growing up, was singing. Either you go somewhere where they're havin' a barn dance or a talent show or you go to somebody's house. If we went to Grandma's house, somebody started singin' and somebody played the guitar. I think that's why there are so many artists comin' out of Texas.

You see, the whole thing about it is that there are so many different kinds of country music, and I don't think people realize that. They say, if you do this, well, you're gettin' away from country music, if you do that, it's gettin' away from country. But there's western swing, which is country jazz, that's all it amounts to. It's our form of jazz music. It's expression and everybody playin' everything they know all at once. And you have cowboy music. Cowboy music and bluegrass are about as far apart as you can get. Or say bluegrass and western swing are the ones that are the farthest apart. And yet they're relative. And then you have your country music, your hillbilly music. The whole thing is, there are so many different kinds of country music, but people try to group it all into one thing. Like the Country Music Association has a bad habit of trying



to think that if you don't do it just one way it's not country music. And that's one of the things that I bumped heads with everybody in the establishment about, and had a lot of problems with when I went there. Because I never felt that you had to have all those limits. I think we have just as much right to try a kazoo—if that complements a record, we have just as much right to use it as anybody. Because if you really want to be pure about what country music is, you can't even use a pick, you gotta use your thumb on a guitar.

Have you ever been a cowboy?

No. The only thing I did, I did a documentary called "My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys." You know, I went down to the O-Six Ranch down in Alpine, Texas, and I went out on a roundup and I found out what I wasn't—and I'm not a cowboy. I'm a cowboy singer, close as I can get to it.

How about rodeo cowboys? Ever hang out with any of them?

Yeah. Larry Mahan and some of those guys. But that I don't understand. That's got to be some kind of addiction. There's got to be something to that. There are a couple of rodeo guys who work for me, and I've asked them, "How in the world do you get off one of them bulls and get on them again?" And they say, "Well, the thing is, there's a little ego to it, you know. I can beat him. I can beat him." And I think that's the way all guys are a little bit.

What was it like playing with Buddy Holly in the Crickets?

I'll tell you, I was so young then, and I was not a good bass player. I played bass in his band and I was his protégé. That was our main relationship. Buddy produced the first record I ever cut, "Jole Blon." It was his idea, his arrangement, gettin' King Curtis there to play saxophone. And I was his protégé. He really believed that I could appeal to other people besides just country fans. He was gonna start his own record label, and that was my first trip to New York. I learned so much from him in the short time that we worked together—about music, about not having limits on your music and not staying there too long. He taught me that. He says try to pull out when you're on top.

How did you feel about rock 'n' roll at the time?

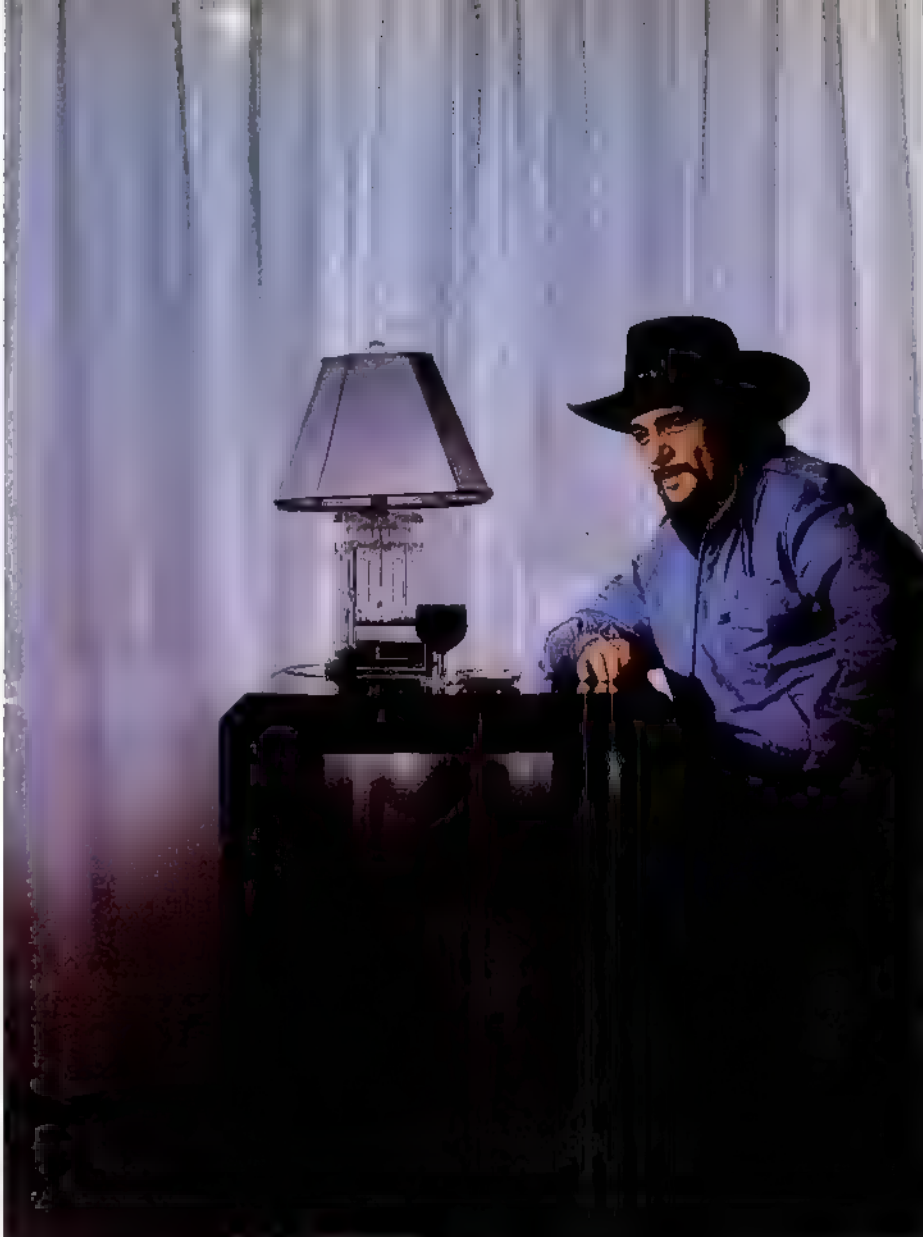
Buddy said, "If anybody asks you what kind of music you play, tell him 'pop.' Don't tell him 'rock 'n' roll' or they won't even let you in the hotel." But I've always loved that type of music. I love rock 'n' roll, real fifties rock 'n' roll. I think Little Richard's "Slippin' and Slidin'" is still one of my favorite things. I think Chuck Berry is one of the great writers of all time, one of the cleverest. He and Roger Miller seem like they ought to be brothers the way they write the clever things they write.

How do you feel about rock 'n' roll now?

I don't understand a lot of it. And I don't like to condemn it, because, you know what? Some of it has got to be great. I think it's got some great things in it. I try to watch it and understand it. But I don't understand a lot of things about it. But that's because maybe they shoot over my head.

What one incident do you remember most about your association with Buddy Holly?

I think it was right here in New York was one of the funniest things. Buddy had my number going in. He knew I'd come right from Littlefield, Texas, and the tallest building I'd ever seen was about 19 stories high. And I knew nothing about this city. It scared me to death when I got here. I remember, the one thing was, he had me so gun-shy about women in this town. Every time I'd see a woman, I'd say, "Golly, looky there, Buddy, lookit that good-lookin' woman." And he'd say, "That ain't a woman, that's a man with a dress on." And he did have me gun-shy.



Chris Carroll

Did you know Hank Williams Sr.?

No, I never did. I never met him.

What's your relationship with Hank Jr.?

I knew Hank Sr. better than I know Hank Jr. [Laughs.] No. Hank is kinda like my kid brother, something like that. There were times when Hank, after he fell off the mountain and everything, and after his mother died, and his life was kind of at a low ebb. I took him with me on the road and put him in my show and talked to him a lot. I think that maybe I helped him a little bit. Maybe helped him get over that shadow thing. It's awful hard being Hank Williams's son and trying to be a singer. But if you look at the things Hank Jr. has done, he's much more talented than his daddy was. His daddy was there first, and with all respects to Hank Sr., if he came into a studio now and sat down and auditioned, he might not get a deal. Course a lot of those songs are timeless, but some of them aren't. You stop and think now, if you're an A&R man and he came in to sing—'cause you know the man was not a great singer—he might have a hard time getting a deal. Again, he was there before Hank Jr. but I think Hank Jr. has made his own mark, there's no shadow there anymore. We call him Hank in other

words.

You thought about writing a book, but you've said, "There are too many people still alive, and I'd end up dead or divorced if I told everything I know."

I was gonna write a book. I actually started it. I got about two or three pages and I was dodging bullets already.

Real ones?

It looked like it. There could have been; if I'd told everything I knew there'd liable have been a lot of problems for me.

"A Man Called Hoss" is subtitled "The story of my life before somebody gets it wrong." Does that mean there are a lot of rumors and untruths circulating about your exploits?

Oh, God, yeah. You know what? If I did everything everybody says I did, I figured it up, I'd be 150 years old and I would look like a gutted snowbird. And that's about what this is about, too, because I've read things and heard things that people said that I didn't say and things that I did. "I heard this story about you and so-and-so and so-and-so..." None of it true. I've sat and heard people tell stories on me and they didn't know it was me sittin' there.

"The CMA awards are a joke; the people have nothing to do with them. They say they keep them a big secret, and that's a big bunch of bull."

Do you think you set yourself up for some of this by labeling yourself an outlaw?

I didn't label myself an outlaw...

By allowing it...

By allowing it, yeah. I'll tell you, when I first came there they called me "the Rebel." I caused a lot of that, I did, but I did it through trying to survive. There was a time when they were tryin' to fix it so I would have to go back to the house and pull a cotton. They were shuttin' doors on me everywhere, and of course I closed a lot of doors on myself. The thing is, I—well, a couple of those stories I may have told myself. It's fun to watch people and see what they think.

You're not a drinking man anymore?

I never did drink. That used to be one of my big brags. I would sit around and say, "I don't drink and I never did drink." There I'd be just stoned out of my gourd on cocaine, but I was real proud of myself because I never did drink. I've had times when people would come up to me and say, "Hey, remember when me and you used to get drunk back in Phoenix there?" And I learned a good lesson: the best thing to say is, "Yeah, and we had a good time, didn't we?" Although it never really happened 'cause I never was a drinker.

Do you still play the honky-tonks?

Once in a while. In fact, that's the best way to get back to the basics. You can play the coliseums and the big auditoriums and after a while the audience starts to look like chairs instead of people, you can't get that one-on-one thing with people. That's one of the things I'm doing with this show, too. There's a real wonderful, one-on-one thing that I do with the people. It's like I'm talkin' to one person. And it's awful hard to do that when you're lookin' at chairs. So even in my hottest days, I had 'em book at least one nightclub, or a honky-tonk, to get me back in touch.

Do you miss it?

Well, I don't wanna do it all the time. I just want to do it about once a month.

Did you ever play any of those places where they throw beer bottles at the stage?

You bet I played them things. In Bozler City, Louisiana, I played in a place where they had chicken wire around the stage. I said, "What's all that chicken wire doin' around there?" And they said, "Well, you'll see about 11 o'clock." And sure enough, beer bottles come flyin' and they'd holler at ya to do their song and if you don't do that song right when they think you ought to you're liable to get a beer bottle thrown at you.

What was it like growing up in a small town in west Texas? What stands out?

It's kinda like bein' jerked up by the hair of the head. I had a pretty normal life. We didn't have any money. But you know what? We didn't know the difference. Nobody else had any either. My dad was a hard workin' man, and I worked from the time I was ten. That was one of the things that I had to learn to do as an adult, was play. 'Cause I didn't know how because I had worked all of my life.

What does "a pretty darn good windmill man" [from the song, "Littlefield"] mean?

You know, I got that from a guy named Sky Corbin, and his dad was the one that said it. He was an old Texas farmer. And he used to say, "Lover, fighter, wild horse rider, and pretty darn good windmill man." Well, a windmill man probably was the worst job a guy can have back there. Because the wind is always blowin' and it can blow as high as 80 miles an hour. And that thing can change direction and that windmill can knock you off of there. It's the greasiest, dirtiest job you can have.

Do you have a favorite on the road story?

Well, now my mind is goin' a hundred miles an hour. You know, dain bramage has set in. Probably the best story I got, maybe not the best one, but it's true. We were booked one time up north here, it was me, Dotty West, Hank Snow, Conway Twitty. Well, this guy that booked us, and this was about 15 years ago, he sent me to Syracuse, where Dotty was supposed to be, and he sent her to Rhode Island, where I was supposed to be. Well, we got up there in Syracuse, and I was there with Conway Twitty, and I have never seen that many ugly women congregatin' in all my life. He draws the ugliest women I have ever seen in my life, and I told him so. I said, "Boy... you do draw an ugly class of women." And he said, "Well, you were booked on the show, too." And I said, "Yeah, but I wasn't advertised."

What's your favorite story about the days when you were living with Johnny Cash?

When Johnny and I were living together, you know, I was supposed to clean the joint up and he did the cookin'. Well he had a good job, because me and him would probably eat about once a month whether we were hungry or not. But John could cook breakfast. He'd cook every breakfast meat you could think of: pork chops, bacon, sausage, ham, he cooked eggs... But the best thing he cooked was gravy and biscuits. Now if you can imagine, in those days, John Cash wore those black suits every day of his life—he also wore 'em out from the inside. You know, John could fidget better than anybody in the world. He had his twitch down real good. You can't imagine anything like Johnny Cash, after he gets through cookin' us breakfast, and havin' bakin' powder from one end of him to the other.

You and Johnny Cash both favor black.

I think both of us may have gotten a little bit of that from old Lash LaRue, the old cowboy. I know I got my hat from him. I saw him when I was a kid. He came to my hometown and it was the most amazing thing I'd ever seen. When he did his whip trick onstage at the theater. It was the only place we had for him to appear and they'd play his movie after he did his whip act. He made a personal appearance there and he ripped the screen—and the last time I was in that theater that screen was still ripped where he'd ripped it with that whip. Anyway, I was a little old kid then, and I went to the lobby to get a drink of water and there stood Lash LaRue, with his whip, his gun, his hat, and all. Dressed in black. They were arguing, him and the manager and the owner of the theater. They was telling him he'd have to pay for the screen. And he told them, "I told you that stage was too small when I went out there. You should have had insurance to cover it." And they said, "Well, you're gonna pay for it." And he says, "I got a gun and a whip that says I won't." And for a kid of about nine years old, that was probably the grandest thing I ever heard in my life.

Who's your favorite country artist of all time?

George Jones. Has to be. If everybody sounded like they wanted to they'd all sound like George Jones. If anybody asked you, if you're just walkin' down the street and somebody says, "Hey, what is

country music?" The only answer you can give 'em is "George Jones."

Do you have a favorite rock or pop artist?

Yeah. I love Bob Seger. He's one of the best rock 'n' rollers there's ever been. One of my favorite songs in the whole world is "Katmandu." I love that, but I don't do that in my shows. I'm under no illusion that I can do rock 'n' roll anymore.

You won four CMA awards. How do you feel about these awards, in general?

I think they're a joke...

You're gonna get in trouble if I write this.

I don't care. You write what I tell ya. I think they're controlled by the record companies. It's controlled by block voting, the people have nothing to do with it. They say they don't know who's gonna get them and all this, and they keep it a big secret and that's a big bunch of bull. I think the thing is, and when it's important, is when you're first starting out—when you first come to Nashville. To be accepted by the people in the business is wonderful. And that's what they should do, really. They are doing more of that, and I agree with it. They're giving it to the younger people instead of—you know, how much more, from one year to another, can Willie Nelson do? How can you say he's the entertainer of the year because he's made great strides in big leaps and bounds. He didn't do that. It's those people who come from oblivion and establish themselves. Now they're the ones who should get it. The awards serve a good purpose in a way, but let's not fool each other: they're controlled and we all know that.

What were your most serious problems with the Nashville music establishment?

One, to control what I was doing. I wanted to be able to go in there and do something and come out and have it be me—and not something that someone else had come up with. I had to have control. I had to get away from that establishment where it was like an assembly line, doing it using the Nashville sound, using the same musicians, and not being able to control anything. And consequently, I never had a hit record, or never had a No. 1 record, until I did walk away from there and go and do something on my own in another studio.

What was the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to you?

The most embarrassing thing that ever happened to me was in Kansas City. I went out onstage, and what's the most embarrassing thing that could happen to you onstage? It's for your fly to be open. Well, my zipper broke on my damn Levis on the first song, and there were about two or three girls out in the front row that let me know that my fly was open. Well, I was monkeying around there trying to get that thing fixed. Never could get it fixed, and here I am, I've done one song and I've gotta do a show. Jessi came out there with some black masking tape and tried to tape it down, but that didn't work. So I had to do the whole show with my fly floppin' open, and goin' back and puttin' the tape back across it. Willie Nelson was really sympathetic, though. When he came out he asked me if I was tryin' to count to 11.

What was the worst trouble you ever got into?

Me? They almost sent me to reform school when I was a kid. Just for gettin' in meanness. But they tried to bust me one time in Nashville, that's what the outlaw bit was all about. They came bounding in like they had Al Capone cornered or something. But they never got it down.

What would you like to be remembered for?

That you can, that a person can blow it... can make it and blow it and hit bottom doing drugs, and come back and be able to survive that and do something worthwhile.

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TALK THIS WAY

STEVEN TYLER COMES CLEAN.

There was three-schoolgirl sweeties, with a classy kinda sassy little skirts climbin' way up their knees in a school gym locker, when Steven noticed they was lookin' at him. He was a high school loser, never made it with a lady until the boys told him somethin' he missed. Then his next-door neighbor with a daughter had a favor, so he gave her just a little kiss, like this—. She told him to walk this way, walk this way. . . .

Then in the seventies, it was "Candy store rock 'n' roll, corporation jelly roll, play the singles; it ain't me. It's programmed insanity. You A.S.C.A.P./B.M.I. could ever make a mountain fly. If Japanese can boil teas, then where the fuck's my royalties?" And in the eighties, it's pretty much the same thing.

Steven Tyler still looks like a cross between Mick Jagger and Carly Simon. He may be drug-free, but he's still cocky and wiry. Aerosmith still get a kinky kind of pleasure trying to stay alive and make the impossible happen with their music, which, 15 albums later, is still a cross between Rolling Stones R&B and Led Zeppelin heavy metal. And they're still in an all-out war with the commercial forces that be. Maybe the reason Tyler did so many drugs, why he left the band, was because he couldn't stand the way things were being done in the music in-

INTERVIEW BY SCOTT COHEN

dustry. It wasn't him, it was programmed insanity. But now Tyler and Joe Perry, the Toxin Twins, have straightened out their drug and personality problems, and the band's moved from CBS in New York to Geffen in Los Angeles. Their new album, *Permanent Vacation*, has so many singles and genres of music on it that everyone who loved or hated Aerosmith is picking up on the fact that Aerosmith is back. They were always a band for risks, always living on the edge. In fact, they went over the edge many times. For Steven, it's even a way of life.

GET YOUR WINGS

I was out there, caught in the world between New Hampshire, which was beautiful country, where my parents had a resort of 360 acres inside thousands of acres around the Lake Sunapee area, where I spent my summers until I was 18, and 5610 Netherland Avenue in Yonkers, New York, where I got in with the gangs and was getting high on booze at 13, and pot at 16. The gang I had was the Green Mountain Boys. I was just coming out of the woods and getting into girls when I really got caught up on my rock 'n' roll albums, where they would take me places. I got the biggest thrill out of grabbing a can of Sterno and a loaf of bread and a thing of butter and my mess kit from the Boy Scouts, fry up bread in the woods and play there all day; climb trees, get filthy, and in all that I heard music. Music was my place, like when I used to play in the woods, under the rhododendron bush. It was my little island, a place for me to go. Music is what prayers are to some monks; it takes me to forever, to eternity and back again. It's a big sideways figure 8. And then, when certain people, like Mick Jagger, the baddest boy on the block, my idol, started coming out of that music, I said fuck, I can do that too, because I could understand that music. I grew up under my father's piano. I know what it's saying to me. It's telling me something. Some people have a calling for Jesus; I have that in music.

GREATEST HITS

"Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" was my song, my bowling alley, make-out-in-the-dark song. Then I got into oldies and a friend and me would go down to 42nd Street, to Slim's, down in the subway, and get all these records, like "Gloria." Then came the English imports, and when I heard "Scratchy" by Travis Wammic—oh, boy, look out. You know I traded in my Roy Orbison, "I'm a Tiger" Fabian shit, and Everly Brothers, who I still love dearly. I mean, you think there's an underground scene now. . . . I remember the first Stones albums, the Who, the Rats from England, and of course the Pretty Things; they were the ones who made it, but there were a lot of groups that didn't, and there-in lies my true Gypsy roots. These guys with the hair down the back, and the boots; I still see something special in that. It knocks me out. Viv

Upper right: Steven Tyler.
Far right: Tom Hamilton.



Mark Weiss/WWA

"Some people have a calling for Jesus; I have that in music. Sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. Take the drugs away and there's more time for sex and rock 'n' roll."

Prince, in the *Pretty Things*, killed me. That stance, that look, I mean, talk about roots. The fucking guy looked like my mother, but you could tell, without a doubt, he had balls up the yinyang.

DRAW THE LINE

There was something really mysterious about playing that type of music, that whole look. What would you call it, gut blues? What people were calling weirdos back then, came from Greenwich Village. The Fugs, Tuli Kupferberg, I loved that. That was the commercial side of what I thought the *Pretty Things* looked like, and to say that is a mouthful, because Tuli Kupferberg is the farthest fucking thing from commercial. For some reason I just saw that as the most avant-garde, artsy, together movement, as far as the art scene went, because they were hanging out so far. The only fucking way human beings can escalate in their productivity and getting towards future man, is to change, and when I see drastic change, when I see water flowing upwards, my eyes go, "What's this!" Like a magnet, I'm just drawn to it. I just let it take me where it's going. If I were to draw the line, that would be like putting the cork in the bottle, and I don't need no stops in my life right now.

SAME OLD SONG AND DANCE

When I was in a band called Chain Reaction, doing "Shin-Dig," or something like that, some-

where in what seemed to me to be the Midwest, the Shangri-Las were doing a gig that same day. We were backstage getting dressed, and Mary, the lead singer of the Shangri-Las, was in her stall pulling on her leather pants, and I thought it was our drummer, so I climbed over the thing and it was like a fantasy come true. It was boing! If she'd have told me to get down and give her fifty, I would have licked her from here to there and back again. She had the kind of voice where I would have dragged my balls through a mile of broken glass just to hear her piss into a tin cup over the phone. She was that great. But she wasn't cool about it. She's a two-stroker; she burst my bubble.

NIGHT IN THE RUTS

A rut is growing up in the drug era where in order to watch a football game you gotta get fucked up. If you couldn't smoke a bowl of DMT, a bowl of red hash, fill your nose with cocaine, and do some THC and two lines of acid, and walk out of the room, you weren't cool. I grew up in that mentality. It worked for me for a while, just as it does for everybody, but I would say now, looking back, don't ever try heroin or coke. In the beginning, it was inspirational for me, but having that addictive personality, growing up where I got to climb that tree, I got to swim longer than you can under water, catch more raccoon than you, have the girlfriend with the biggest tits—a mentality which I have and will always have, because I love it—

drugs were no longer a sled for me to ride down the biggest hill and be the first to hit the bottom; it became an elephant on my back and I never made it onto the sled. But I never realized it until four years ago, when I almost died. I lost my spark, I couldn't write as good anymore. That was a major rut. I had hit my bottom. I died of drugs.

I can't tell kids, "Don't do drugs," I can only be an example to them. Drugs might sound glamorous, as it did to me, hearing about Keith and his shooting heroin and getting his blood changed in the Alps while he was yodelling; but that was me. I had a lot of role models who died of heroin. Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix. I remember when we played at the Scene and Jimi was playing there and I remember Jim Morrison was there the week before I went down and we got into this Corvette and went to Palisades Park and Jimi had a glass vial with popper in it and we sat in the front of the roller coaster and when we got on top of the first hill we opened that thing and took a hit and I left my head at the top of the hill.

Some of that stuff is interesting, and it's fun and all, but it's like I say, I can't tell kids not to do drugs, because human beings are human beings. They told Magellan and the guy who, they said when we grew up, discovered America, not to do something; they didn't give a shit. They were told the Earth was flat, but they still went off and discovered America. You tell human beings "Don't," but they're gonna. Drugs are just like that monkey in the cage who keeps hitting that button for more heroin, more cocaine. He'll take it over food. Sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. Take the drugs away, and there's more time for sex and there's more time for rock 'n' roll.

DONE WITH MIRRORS

Elvis was one of the great tricksters in history. He never wrote any songs, but he played the game marvelously. I'm sure he hurt a lot of people deeply and gave them no credit. The other side is, he sang their songs so well, that they might not have gotten out there if he didn't. You think about it: there was that guy who wrote that song and he's listening to it on the radio and his name isn't on it. I mean, talk about hell on Earth. It's like carving a monolith to your girlfriend and it turns into the Eiffel Tower or the Statue of Liberty and nobody knows you did it. Elvis tricked everybody, but he fooled them in a good way.

Bob Dylan is another trickster. I think Bob Dylan got caught up in his own self, just like a lot of people do. Who the fuck is he? He's Robert Zimmerman. I think he got caught up in booze and got in that motorcycle accident. The way people perceive him is twisted. He's truly a sage and a bard, but I think we all are, except, when we start to believe it, we lose that gift of the energy therein.

We're all tricksters. It depends upon how big our bag is. John Lennon did the greatest thing with lyrics. He was the yin for McCartney's yang. Madonna has a big fucking bag. She's working hard on keeping her body looking good. And when she goes out there and plays, she's got that fever that I have and Jagger has



Bob Dylan



Neal Preston

and a lot of people have who play in front of a lot of people. ■ makes me want to get my body big.

CLASSICS

The Beach Boys' *Smiley Smile*, that album is so heavy. It's so right off the shelf. It's easy to understand, and then again, it's so fucking out there. It's like Andy Warhol; how simple to take a can of Campbell soup and blow it up, but he did it, and it was genius. Brian Wilson did that too. He took real obvious stuff and did it so well. I mean, "My Favorite Vegetables," that's big time for me. John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, that's a classic. So is Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, and *Rodan*. When I saw that scene with the eggs at the end, with the little baby, I cried. Dave Clark Five's turtleneck shirts and the Beatle boot with the high heel, yet it came to a point. In '68 there was a boot Florshiem had that came up to the calf that had the longest heel. I must have gone through eight

pairs of those, because every time I found a fox, she'd want my boots and I'd wind up giving 'em to her, so she could walk all over me with 'em. Then there's the classic Mercedes 210, egg-shell with red leather interior, and the Porsche turbo Carrera. Photographs of groups of people on the beach at Coney Island, opium dens, and stuff by that guy who took that couch and brought it all over the world, are classics; so is anything Hawaiian.

PERMANENT VACATION

If I was to go on permanent vacation, I'd go to Maui with my girlfriend, who's one of the twins, who makes my clothes and cooks my dinner, and I'd take along some early Stones, the Who, "Psychotic Reaction," the Pretty Things, *Smiley Smile*, *Travels with Charley*, *Rodan*, some turtleneck shirts, Beatle boots with high heels and pointy toes, photographs of people at Coney Island, and a couch.

WALK THIS WAY

Any girl in high heels and tight dungarees who you can put three fingers between her pussy and

her legs, got a great walk.

ANGELS

When I was very young, life after death wasn't tangible. An animal got hit in the road; its eyes were bulging and that was the end of it. I couldn't imagine my mother with her eyes popped out like that. So life after death was so important to me that I used to think that once I got my voice on a record, it would be around forever. In fact, when I was a kid I used to get out a chisel and put my initials on this huge rock behind my house up in New Hampshire, because I never knew what was going to happen to me, so people in the future, whatever they're going to look like, would see it, and know it was me. That was my striving for eternal life. That helped me in wanting to be a rock 'n' roll singer. I just wanted to get my foot in the door, because once I did, forget it.

I still believe in higher powers, but I've just come to find out that we spend all our life building up this big ego and that human beings tend to get in their own way, and not until we come to realize that letting go of all we hold so dearly, and that all we hold so dearly is nothing com-

Top: Steven Tyler, the lips that changed the course of heavy metal. Right: Joe Perry.

pared to when we let go of it all, shit happens. Talk about a stopper in a bottle; we spend our whole lives building this stopper in the bottle, but our cups never runneth over until you pull the fucking cork out and allow stuff to flow in.

GIRL KEEPS COMING APART

Girls fall apart because they think they need a man. People rely on each other so much and don't build themselves up. They don't realize that they are number one, that they are the force and that without them, others are nothing. So many women are out there festering because their man's fucking other girls, because they're getting pinched and googled at and talked down to at their jobs because they're only women. But it goes the other way too. She does what she pleases to the cock she teases.

TOYS IN THE ATTIC

I have the same things in my attic that everybody takes out every once in a while. It's like Christmas. They take their tree out, they smell it and it reminds them of their childhood. It's the only time of the year that people give anything to anyone, other than a quick kiss or a fuck. Children have so much energy running through them that if they lose a finger, they can sometimes grow that finger back, bone and all. And when they pretend and they climb that fucking beanstalk and they go see the monster, it's really there. The attic's that place, where I can go within and pretend. I can sit all alone, quietly in a room, and meditate and go back to any place I ever was when I was a kid. I can go under the table with a blanket thrown over it and pretend it was Mookahooka Island, I'm flying freely over the ocean and watching porpoises jump as I skim two inches over the water. I can sit on a rock in the middle of a stream and smell the water. That's my attic. I just got to wipe the cobwebs off my hair.



Neal Preston

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FUTURE SHOCK

THE CLASS OF 1988

Ask Ivan Boesky. Ask Ollie North. Ask Judge Ginsburg. Or better still, ask James Brown. He knows. "You know, we're dealing with a very critical and crucial time, the most crucial and critical time that I have ever witnessed, being as young as I am—you know, we all don't want to say nothing else, so we say as young as we are." Right on, James. We'll take it from here.

Fourteen years after Patti Smith's "Piss Factory," new music is at a crisis. Record companies are turning away from new bands, and putting their money into reissues and CDs. Indies have lost their romance. The old punk shock has become institutionalized, and college radio hasn't panned out like we hoped. The ghost of punk carries on predictably behind closed doors, while established national acts seize the good nights at once-nurturing clubs.

Yet new music continues to flourish. And where it was once pushed to the margin, it now floods *all* the margins, surrounding the host. Real good music, good like the old stuff, challenges the shapes of metal, hip hop, country, reggae, pop, and dance music. Over the next 11 pages, SPIN salutes the Class of '88, our very select sampling of performers who promise to get under a lot of people's skin in the coming year.

M/A/R/R/S

M/A/R/R/S began as a collaboration between Martyn and Steve Young of the 4AD band Colourbox and Alex and Rudi of A. R. Kane. By the time it became clear that the collaboration wasn't working, wheels were in motion: "Pump up the Volume" was under way. At a late stage, deejays Dave Dorrell and Chris "C.J." Mackintosh were recruited to provide scratching and cutting. Now M/A/R/R/S is an acronym for a partnership that no longer exists. Who is M/A/R/R/S?

"We wanted to have a feeling of total anonymity," says Martyn Young.

And what is "Pump up the Volume"?

"We knew what we didn't want to end up with," says Young, "but we didn't know what we would end up with. We didn't want it to end up sounding polished, we wanted it to sound..." He pauses to think of the best possible word... "primitive."

"Pump up the Volume" throws a fascinating light on aspects of the volatile British music scene, where a number of divisions create tension and generate new material. In the north, dancers and deejays prefer fast, high-energy house music, once from Chicago, but much of it now home-grown. In the south, they like slow beats from rap, and a phenomenon known as rare groove.

Rare groove is a revival of obscure or cultish dance tracks from the 1970s: disco or street funk with wah-wah guitars, organ, and busy James Brown-style drumming. Initially growing out of the rap scene, and a very British obsession with the break beats that formed its source, rare groove is fast becoming the spearhead of a seventies revival that includes, at its most arcane, a core of devotees prepared to wear platform shoes, cream or white flared suits, and shirts with wide collars.

Superfly and *Shaft*, outfitting from a SoHo clothing store called Fuffer of St. George, and seventies theme nights are the sharp end of a London cult that is rapidly growing mainstream. "Pump up the Volume" not only caught this market but also, with its faster tempo and house feel, appealed to northern England and Scotland. The record was both a product of the British club scene and a gift back to it.

"Pump up the Volume" is just one of the club-based records to bubble up from the rare groove scene. Coldcut's "Beats and Pieces," another deejay-generated record, picks up where New York montages like Double Dee and Steinski's "The Pay-Off Mix" or "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel" left off. "I think it's good that deejays are doing music," says Young. "I think they have a special knowledge that the rest of us humanity don't have."

Yet "Pump up the Volume," an elegantly simple dance record, has run into controversy. Although its remix dropped in prominent snatches of tracks like the Bar Kays' "Holy Ghost," the Last Poets' "Mean Machine



Lawrence Watson

"We wanted to have a feeling of total anonymity."

Chant," Pressure Drop's "Rock the House," and the Montana Sextet's "Who Needs Enemies with Friends Like You," a tiny section of Stock, Aitken, Waterman's "Roadblock" elicited two legal actions from Peter Waterman.

This is the inconvenient downside to a record, and a movement, which had otherwise

flung all the creative doors wide open.

M/A/R/R/S is already planning its next record, on which the group will attempt to avoid legal problems by programming the rare groove feel electronically.

"We talking generation gap, now," says Dorrell. "There's a generation that grew up in the clubs probably because of the death of the live market. 'Pump up the Volume' reflects that generation."

—David Toop

GUNS N' ROSES

"Don't tell me you never threw a fuckin' TV set out a window."

Duff McKagan and his band, Guns N' Roses, have an image problem. Their debut album, *Appetite for Destruction*, is making its way toward *Billboard* respectability, and they're beginning their tour with Mötley Crüe, but people don't seem to want to concentrate on the band's, uh, art. "People don't really like us, they think we're dickheads from hell," says Duff. "And they write a lot of shit. But imagine yourself being 22, in a band on the road, loving and getting alcohol and women everyday. They'd start talking about you, too."

Singer Axl Rose interrupts his account of how he taped one of his sexual encounters and put the moans on the album, to chime in: "Yeah, I don't know whether they think it's irrelevant or whether they think our music is not credible, but they are not writing about it. The biggest bands in the world have done everything we do and more."

In the back of the tour bus, Axl tells his bodyguard Ronnie to attend to the seven women with whom he has had sex in the last three days, all of whom have managed to get on the bus at the same time, and he begins to talk about religion. "I've been singing since I was five years old," he says. "I sang in church from the age of five until I was 15. It was a Pentecostal holy roller church, eight miles out in the country. I played the piano in church. I even taught bible school one year. Then I got into *The Greatest Gospel Hits of the '70s*, and it was all over."

But before Axl can explain how his religious background figures into Guns N' Roses, turbulence once again bursts in—in the person of Slash, the band's lead guitarist. It seems that the band's vodka bottles have been disappearing. "It's [Mötley Crüe drummer] Tommy Lee's little sister," he says, swinging his bottle of Jim Beam. "She's a real pain in the ass."

The tour manager promises to take care of her, and tranquility, however fragile, is temporarily restored. But even this is short-lived, as the mythological contingencies of being an old-fashioned rock 'n' roll band—not to mention seven unhappy women—hover just outside.

"This year," Axl says, "I was only arrested once, at the Canadian border, for my stun gun. I didn't know they're illegal there."

"Slash and I almost got arrested in Seattle," adds Duff. "We went back there for a little vacation, we were going to burn some bar down. Then on the way back to L.A., we were drunker than shit, and we sat next to this kindergarten teacher on the plane. First she told us to calm down. Then she pulled out this book she wrote called *From A to Z*, and she read it to us, and drew pictures for us. By the end of the flight we were so tranquil, we went right to sleep."

—Barracuda



Robert John



Polly Parral

THE CROWN SEEKERS

Gospel has rarely embraced rock 'n' roll, but rock 'n' roll from the very start embraced gospel...or, to be more precise, elements of gospel: its ecstasies and its fervor and its fall-down-on-the-floor-with-your-eyes-open abandon. Only, on the other side of ecstasy, it offered a one-on-one pact with The Void rather than with The Lord. In the case of certain genuine ecstasies (the Velvet Underground, the Stooges, Stravinsky), ■ embraced both at the same time. But that doesn't happen too often.

With the current pop scene offering us heroes but no shamans, the church once again has a corner on the market of ecstasy and rejoicing and on the sweet and wailing harmonies usually associated with the Four Tops and with the Temptations. Groups like

the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Five Blind Boys, the Sensational Williams Brothers, and the Nightingales have been traveling up and down the country from church to church and from tent to tent, testifying and laying down a groove as slippery and as funky as can be.

The Crown Seekers, six men from Marrero, Louisiana, who've been traveling this circuit for over 22 years, aren't known too well outside of the Deep South, but they embody all that's best and wild and strong in gospel music.

"We've had a chance to make pop records, and you know we all like to sing ■ little bit of pop once in a while, but that's not really our tradition, that's not really where we come from or where we're going. We all grew up loving groups like the Violinaires, the Soul Stirrers, and the Pilgrim Jubilee Singers, and I think we're caught somewhere between these three groups, just carrying on from them," says James Williams, who, with Robert Young, leads the Crown Seekers.

"We don't do a lot of partying; I'm 43 and Young's in his 50s. But we do do ■ whole lot of rejoicing. That's what we're here for, and that's what we do.

"See, before, people used to like the sadder, more tearful songs, but I find that lately people really need to be uplifted; they come out to

"We don't do a lot of partying, but we do do ■ whole lot of rejoicing."

hear us in order to rejoice, to be lifted up. And that's what we do."

Their records (released by Golden Shield Records from Baton Rouge, Louisiana) are filled with gorgeous, effortless harmonizing, and the strong, simple rhythms of old Stax records. Though casually recorded, they still have a power and a drive, especially in songs like the roaring "Let's Get Serious" or "Send Me," a sanctified rewrite of the Jacksons' "I'll Be There."

Live, however, there's nothing casual about their performance. At last year's Jazz & Heritage Festival in New Orleans, they rocked the gospel tent and sent the faithful and the curious alike shaking and stomping, lost in the unstoppable harmonies and in the soaring falsetto of youngest member Greg Sanders, who at 24 has the warmth and energy of the Temptations' Eddie Kendricks. In all that heat and glory, you could take your pick and shake hands with The Lord and The Void and still be home in time for supper.

—Brian Cullman

SINÉAD O'CONNOR

Though frequently linked with friends and musical associates U2, 20-year-old Sinéad O'Connor is forging a personal musical style that veers between the poetic fire of Patti Smith and the musical sensitivity and quirkiness of Kate Bush ("Kate Bush? Oh, well, I'm glad it's Kate Bush rather than Spania or something."). Her self-produced album, *Lion and the Cobra*, was just released in America, and she'll begin a tour of the States in early '88.

"The album title is from Psalm 91; it says that you'll 'trample on the lion and the cobra,' which means that overcoming obstacles and difficulties in your life and your personality will make you become the person you want to be and do the things you want to do. Which I think I've done.

"Cutting my hair turned out to serve a very useful purpose. I think it's good that there is a shocking element to the way I look. People expect to hear one thing, and what they *do* hear is completely different. Seeing [the record], people will probably think it's going to be punk and won't buy it; or they *will* buy it because they'll think it's punk, and then they'll hate it. I don't know.

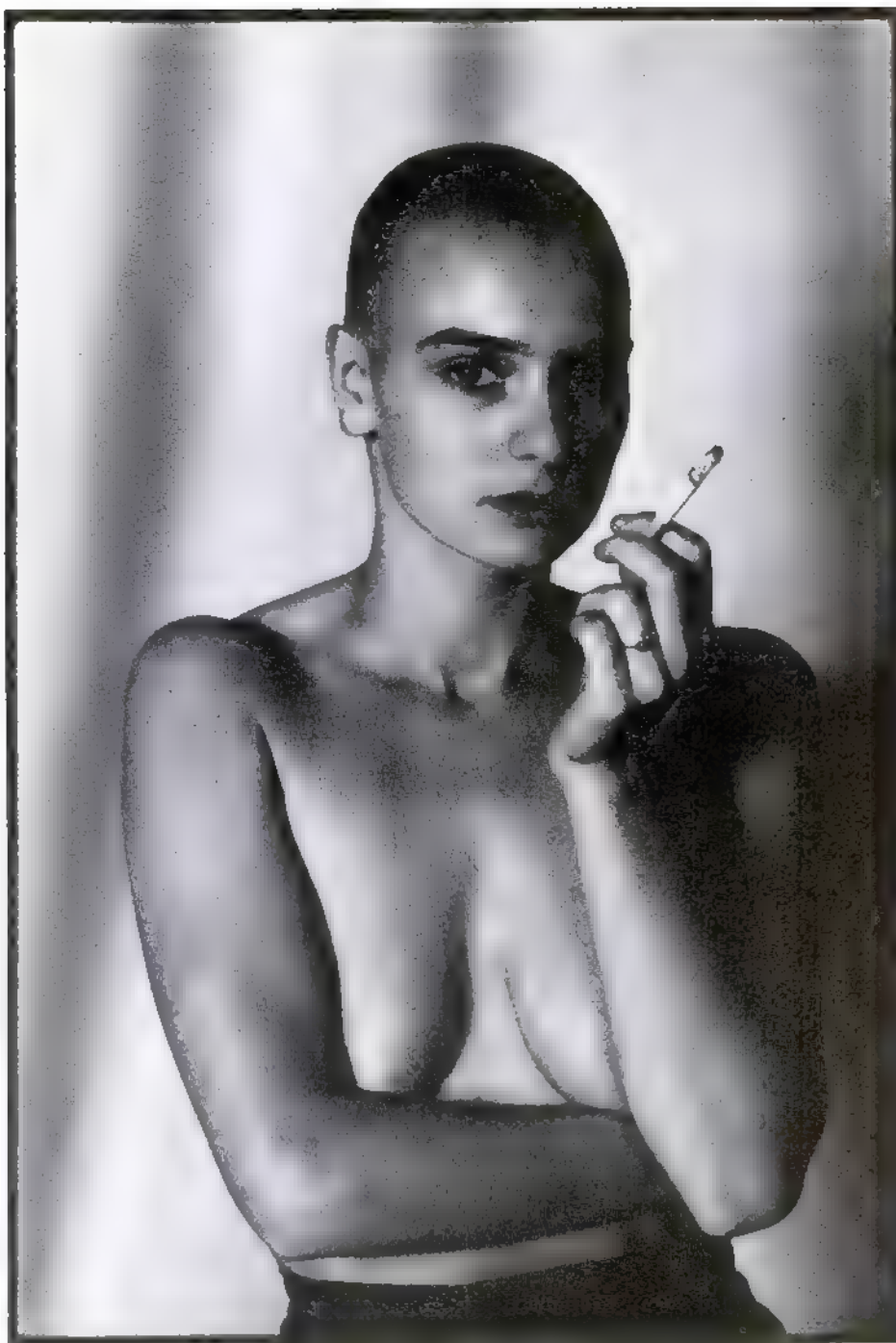
"My first record company kept telling me to wear high heels and stuff, but I just don't fit into that. People like Jody Watley and Madonna, they choose to be like that, and I would never slag them for it. But what pisses me off is when I've got seven or eight record company fat pig men sitting there telling me what to wear. It becomes ridiculous.

"Producing the record [myself] was an accident. I was in the studio about a year ago with a producer, but it really fucked up. He had all these preconceived ideas, the first being that if I was a girl and 19, I obviously knew fuck-all about the music business or what I wanted. Secondly, because I was Irish and a woman, he assumed it was going to be some 'mystical, mysterious, earthy sort of album, man.' You know, I like people like the Smiths and Prince, hip hop, Salt-n-Pepa, and people like that. But here I had no say in *anything*.

"The record company didn't like it much either, so we just stopped the whole thing. We sat around trying to think of who could produce it, but all we had to show producers was the stuff this jerk had done. It was so bad nobody wanted to do it. Finally I asked the record company if I could do it myself, and they said yes. It was a case of not being able to get anybody else.

"I'd like to be successful, but I wouldn't like to be a pop star. I'd just like to be respected for the kind of stuff I do and not be slotted in anywhere. In five years if it all fucked up and there was nothing happening, I think I'd just bugger off to Africa or something and be a farmer. It sounds really boring, but that's what I'd like to do."

—Elin Wilder



Anton Corbijn



Lawrence Wilson

PUBLIC ENEMY

Critics don't like them. Black radio stations won't play them. But in less than a year Public Enemy has managed to sell 275,000 copies of their debut LP, *Yo! Bum Rush the Show*, and has toured the U.S. and Europe with L.L. Cool J.

They hit the stage like an alliance of shock troop and rap group. Behind them stand the SIWs (which stands for Security of the First World), their gun-toting, Muslim backup crew (the guns are unloaded). The music is hard and the message is strong—maybe too strong for some. Chuck D is the meat of the message, and Flavor-Flav is the spice—the younger sidekick who tempers the militance.

"You wear a clock to know what time it is. And when you know what time it is, that means you are aware. And we are very aware, so we wear bigger clocks than many." —Chuck D

SPIN: Why Public Enemy?

CHUCK D: It's to the public that totally believes in the goodness of the system and that believes that the system is good. I'm their enemy because the system is not good and the system has treated black people on the whole in one of the cruelest manners in mankind. And this is the same system that uses people on the whole—their hands over their hearts and swear to a flag. Or, you know, saying, "In God We Trust." But whose God? Whose God do they trust? It's the same country that had blacks in slavery and bondage for three hundred years and then another mental slavery that's going on now which has gotten to the point of a brainwashing that has blacks killing themselves. So whose God is this country's God? Hmm? So basically then, to the people that believe in this system and believe that America is beautiful—I'm their enemy. I'm the public enemy: the black man is the public enemy.

SPIN: Is that what you're talking about in "You're Gonna Get Yours"?

CHUCK D: "You're Gonna Get Yours" is about police arrest in black neighborhoods. If you have a fly car and you drive around, the police will tend to stop you more often than not. And I've been stopped plenty of times.

SPIN: Because you're driving the ultimate homeboy car? The '98?

CHUCK D: Right. That's like a Kangol hat. Oldsmobile '98 is the ultimate homeboy car, you know? And just because you're drivin' it, a lot of times police will stop you because they think you're a drug dealer and they tend to stereotype. So basically, I'm attacking the stereotype. Drug dealers don't drive '98s.

SPIN: You're very outspoken about Louis Farrakhan. ...

CHUCK D: Well, basically I support the black leaders that want to take a stand. My whole issue is the us-against-us campaign and trying to convince black people to respect each other and love each other. And, politically, Farrakhan speaks for the same thing. But media blows it out of proportion. When I say I support Farrakhan, a lot of people in the media just think I'm a racist and that I agree with hate mongers. The media has always taken Louis Farrakhan out of context. You have to understand the man in order to judge the man. And the media in America is the one to blame for the brainwashing of a lot of people in the public. So politically, I stand by any black leaders that take a stand and defend what they say and basically attack the American system. That goes for Farrakhan. It goes to some degree for Jesse Jackson, goes back to the Panthers.

SPIN: Why all the Uzi imagery onstage and in the song "Muuzi Weighs a Ton"?

FLAVOR-FLAV: Because my Uzi weighs a ton. My Uzi weighs more than a ton. There's no limitation to the weight of my Uzi. My Uzi is my mind, the bullets are the words I speak. You know what I'm sayin'? So there's no limitation to that. You know the mind is heavy. And words are heavy. The words are comin' at you rapid-fire. Like a machine gun—da-d-da-d-da-da-da-da-da. But it's not promotin' guns. It's not promotin' violence.

SPIN: In "Bring the Noise" on the *Less Than Zero* sound track, Flavor says, "They're sayin' we're too black, man." Who's "they"?

CHUCK D: People are saying that records I made on my last album and "Rebel Without a Pause" were the most offensive records ever, just on the basis of how I sounded. My records are "too black." People said, "You guys are preachin' that black militancy stuff and we ain't into that." Most of the people sayin' that are black radio stations. They figure our message is too black and too strong and not realizing that black radio is before the downfall of the black American mind... because they're not educating, they're not stimulating, they're just pacifying with the R&B typical bullshit. I'd like to blame radio stations and that's what "Bring the Noise" is about. If they're callin' my music "noise." If they're saying that I'm really getting out of character being a black person in America, then fine—I'm bringin' more noise.

The message is aimed at black youth and at the same time, it's aimed at the black bourgeoisie because basically, they really don't give a damn about the black youth—whether they say so or not.

SPIN: You're very outspoken about critics. ...

"To the people that believe in this system and believe that America is beautiful—I'm their enemy."

CHUCK D: Yeah, that part is about rock critics that don't consider rap music being legitimate as much as rock 'n' roll is. We say, you know, "You call 'em demos, but we ride limos, too." You know, people gettin' paid and billin' arenas just the same as Def Leppard and the rest of these clowns. If the critics are gonna consider it just a music that's just gonna be here and disappear or that it's just supposed to be party music, then they better realize that they earn their bread and butter off some of this, too. That's basically who that half of "Bring the Noise" is dedicated to: half of it's for black radio and the other half is for critics. Like the one who wrote a story on L.L. Cool J [SPIN, Sept. '87]. Excuse my language, but that fuckin' bitch, you know, she tried to play us off like when we did a show in New Orleans with Kool Moe Dee and just tried to make a joke of what we stood for, sayin', "These guys look like they came out of *Platoon*." You know what I'm sayin'? At the same time, the whole article was sarcastic as far as rap was approached anyways. So I'm saying, that fuckin' bitch is in trouble. Who the fuck is she? Fuck her, Christgau, Leland, and the goddamn fuckin' bullshit-assed newspapers they write for. F-U-C-K T-H-E-M, exclamation point. And point blank, you know, words are cheap.

—Jessica Bendinger



Glenn Friedman



Glenn Friedman



Alan Frank

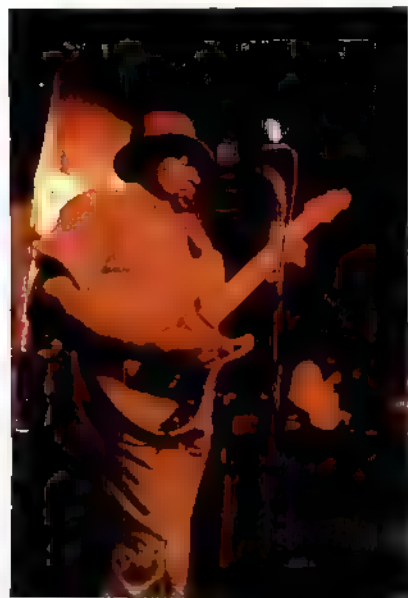
THE JELLY ROLL KINGS

Albums that are going to be classics often tell you a lot about what you can expect from them in the first line of the first song. Bob Dylan, *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965): "Mama's in the basement mixin' up the medicine...." The Rolling Stones, *Let It Bleed* (1969): "A storm is threatening our very lives today...." The Jelly Roll Kings, *Rockin' the Juke Joint Down* (1979): "Sittin' on the slop jar, waitin' for my bowels to move...."

And what does *that* tell you? From now on, the Kings seem to be saying, things are gonna be *funky*. Of course, any intimations this trio of Mississippi blues-thugs may have had about their first album changing things were premature. But now the Jelly Roll Kings have followed that unheralded 1979 debut with a new, tougher-than-tough solo album by their guitar-strangler, Big Jack Johnson (*The Oil Man*, Earwig, 1987). The Kings' harp- and piano-man, Frank Frost, has achieved celluloid hero status providing a few moments of badly needed authenticity in the yuppie blues-disaster movie *Crossroads*. And Johnson, Frost, and genius groove-drummer Sam Carr have deigned to venture out of the Mississippi Delta and play high-profile watering holes like New York's Lone Star Cafe, where they recently rocked the rafters. This time the Jelly Roll Kings are gonna be funky all over the place, and not just all over the slop jar.

1986: My first encounter with the Jelly Roll Kings. I'm standing in the noonday sun in front of a makeshift stage, on Helena, Arkansas's main street. This sleepy little Delta town has invited all its blues prodigals back home for an all-day bash—"festival" would be putting too fine a point on it. Suddenly, unannounced, this Earthquake McGoon-type character steps up to the lip of the stage and hits a ringing, trebly tone-cluster on his guitar. In all my years as a

Like a six-string chainsaw with humbucking pickups.



Alon Frank



Alon Frank

connoisseur of overdriven twin-reverb amps, harmonic distortion, sawtooth-wave interference patterns, and general electric guitar mayhem, I have never heard anything more delicious. It's like having your skull sliced open by a six-string chainsaw with humbucking pickups, maybe better. Sonic Youth, eat your heart out.

The guitarist, Big Jack Johnson, starts singing; Howlin' Wolf might have sounded like this if he'd risen all wormy from the grave and swallowed Captain Beefheart whole. Frank Frost, not to be outdone, shakes out his extra-long mike cord, firmly grips his harmonica, and leaps ten feet off the stage onto a gravel parking lot, blowing all the while. There's a lardcake of a teenage girl nearby, dancing to the cross-rhythms Sam Carr is stitching this aural assault together with. Her hips twitch, her arms windmill, she's rubbernecking to the harp's emphatic screeching, and the rest of her is vibrating like jello in time with Big Jack's guitar vibrato, which he gets by savagely abrading the strings with one humongous ham of a thumb.

Just when I'm starting to settle in, surprised to have finally made it to blues heaven but perfectly willing to go with the flow, the Kings shift gears, launching into this crypto-shitkicker instrumental that's naggingly familiar, only I can't place it.... Until the chorus loops around again and there can no longer be any doubt, it's "Tom Dooley." A Kingston Trio cover? Just when I thought I'd got the groove, the Jelly Roll Kings have reamed my mind again.

Now some folks think the blues is dead, and they're *half* right. The four or five Good Housekeeping-approved Keepers of the Blues Flame and most of the Genuine Houserocking Journeymen are dead, actually. But not every bluesman has followed the music's trail of tears from the deep South cotton fields to Chicago steel mills to European folk festivals to lucrative college gigs to Vegas to "Saturday Night Live." A few diehards—not as few as you might suppose—stayed behind to molder and mutate in the Delta's cypress swamps and sloughs.

They've never played for a crowd concerned with *preserving their purity*; instead, they've nurtured their individuality and eccentricities in the Delta's cinderblock cut-and-shoot juke joints. If they get the notion to cover "Tom Dooley" or sing about their bowel movements, they just go ahead.

Until recently, you had to hang out in joints so dangerous they should carry the Surgeon General's warning sticker if you wanted to get a solid earful of savage-mutant bluesoids like the Kings, T-Model Ford, CeDell Davis, and Jessie Mae Hemphill. These people haven't recorded much. The Kings' 1979 debut album was a start, but it sounds like it was engineered by a budding folklorist as a doctoral dissertation. Sam Carr's muscular tone and pinpoint definition of drum-kit timbres is reduced to an uninspiring clatter, and Big Jack's guitar just taps you politely on the shoulder, when it should be picking your pocket while slitting your throat.

Johnson's *The Oil Man*, though, will do just fine. This time, Earwig Records mogul Michael Robert Frank has found a Chicago studio where the magico-religious implications of distortion are genuinely appreciated. Big Jack's guitar is once again the six-string chainsaw I heard in Helena; Frank Frost makes an upright piano sound like an old Farfisa shorting out in a shower of sparks. Sam Carr is missed, but the two brothers who manhandle bass and drums are more than adequate replacements. This is postpunk, industrial-grade blues, music that would be more at home on SST Records, or sharing a stage with Live Skull than at a folk festival. By all means, investigate the first Jelly Roll Kings album; it includes "Slop Jar Blues," and you can't live without that. But Big Jack Johnson's *The Oil Man* is massive, crucial; it's got "Tom Dooley." And it's got "Catfish," a milestone of sonic-stun guitar and vocal vandalism that used to be an authentic, traditional folk-type blues, but isn't any more.

—Robert Palmer



LYLE LOVETT AND NANCIE GRIFFITH

Lyle Lovett, 29, was born, raised, and still lives in the remaining rurality of Klein, Texas, 30 miles north of Houston. It was once a farming community, but as Houston sprawled upward and land value soared, Klein became increasingly developed and modern. Lovett's music straddles a similar fence between rural and urban. His wonderful MCA debut, *Lyle Lovett*, hopscoches from stone country ("Cowboy Man" made it to No. 9 on *Billboard's* country chart) to sensitive balladry ("Closing Time," recently covered by Lacy J. Dalton) to bombastic wordplay ("God Will"). Of those bearing the torch for the new Nashville, a posse that includes Steve Earle, Randy Travis, and Dwight Yoakam, Lovett is most likely to wander off in a number of different directions. Though his voice sounds like the best Levi's 501 commercial you ever heard, he's less a singer than a songwriter, less country than universal. Like Tom Waits, he can

nail down a whole bunch of emotional territory with just one line. Unlike Waits, however, Lovett delivers his insights from such a smooth and shimmering vocal region that passive listeners are unaware of the lyrical racket going on.

Lovett's long-delayed follow-up, *Pontiac*, (set for release in January '88) finds him drifting closer to the mainstream, with only three of the LP's ten cuts being classifiable as "country." Ironically, the two poppiest numbers, "Walk Through the Lowlands" and "L.A. County" feature background vocals by Emmylou Harris. Mass appeal for Lovett depends on whether luck gives him one monster hit to get the rest of the country curious. That break may take years, but that's probably just fine for the shy, polite Lovett, who's the kind of guy who calls his parents on Arbor Day to ask how the old oak tree is doing.

Nanci Griffith's "overnight" success took even longer than Lovett's. Born in Austin to a mother who dabbled in theater and a father who sang in a barbershop quartet, Griffith was encouraged to pursue her musical ambitions. Her parents chaperoned her first club gigs when she was 14.

Griffith's saloon apprenticeship included five years of Sunday nights at the Hole-in-the-Wall, which would later find prominence as Timbuk 3's launching pad. Nanci sold her first two albums, *There's a Light Beyond These*

Nanci Griffith looks like a Yankee; then she opens her mouth, and out rolls Texas.

Woods and Poet in My Window, during breaks from the stage.

When Griffith's fine *Once In a Very Blue Moon* (1985) and *Last of the True Believers* (1986) LPs were released on Philo/Rounder, it became apparent that a new folk star had arrived. She toured non-stop for two years, headlining at folkie clubs and opening a score of dates for the Everly Brothers. One of her songs from *Last of the True Believers*, "Love at the Five and Dime," was picked up by Kathy Mattea, who received a Grammy nomination for her interpretation.

Griffith signed to MCA/Nashville in 1985 and recorded *Lone Star State of Mind* with the intent of appealing to country audiences as well as to the folk crowd. Musically, the results were mixed, especially when Griffith took to the road with a collection of matching polyester-attired Nashville hacks. She's always been better with just a guitar across a Victorian white dress and a microphone in front of her Gidgetian face.

The upcoming Griffith LP finds the country munchkin moving back to the folkie side of town. Though the advance single, "Never Mind," penned by Harlan "I Fall to Pieces" Howard, is finding favor with the beard and belt-buckle crowd, the rest of *Little Love Affairs* (fittingly to be released on Valentine's Day) is more coffeehouse than roadhouse.

The national strides taken by Lovett, Griffith, and cohorts Darden Smith and Robert Earl Keen have rejuvenated the once-vibrant, once-stale country/folk scene in Austin. The only thing this movement has in common with the old outlaws (Waylon and Willie and the boys) is that they keep headquarters in the same liberal outpost. The new Austin country doesn't thumb its nose at Nashville, it keeps an apartment there. It doesn't wear cowboy hats, drink Wild Turkey, or wake up next to mysteries. It carpets the pickup bed. The new kids in town don't think it's sissy to sing pretty or shave.

They look like Yankees; but then they open their mouths, and out rolls Texas, porch Texas, where the mailman sits fanning himself with the Pritchard's Montgomery Ward catalogue, and curses the bumpy roads.

—Michael Corcoran

Would you trust an acoustic guitar in the hands of a guy named Lyle?





At Sonic Sound Productions, a small, fenced-in compound on Retirement Road in Trenchtown, Yellowman gives the finger to a passing bus. "People like slack music," he says, referring to the current Jamaican passion for dirty lyrics. "They like sickness."

It's the week before Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare's Fourth Taxi Connection Concert, and the nation's top names are gathered to rehearse with their favorite rhythm section. For seven days, the street has become a forum for pranks, jokes, tempers, and debate on the current state of reggae. "Instead of progressing, we're stagnating," says Bunny Wailer. "We're stagnating a culture with all this cocaine and punany [slack music]. You can't call it a phase, because the children are growing up with it. It's the standard they look to. They are aspiring to the bottom."

"If you want to see the next thing in reggae music," says saxophonist Dean Fraser, "get out of Kingston. Go talk to Jack Ruby."

Fifteen years ago, Jack Ruby found a young Jamaican vocal trio helmed by Winston Rodney, and produced "Marcus Garvey," the first single for a group called Burning Spear.

Today, as he stands beside his Mercedes Benz in the courtyard of his Ocho Rios home, he blasts the music of his latest find, another trio, for a new generation. The group is called Foundation. "Listening to what I produced with Burning Spear," says Ruby, "I never could afford to go below that level. Foundation are the most promising artists I've seen in Jamaica in years. They sound like the old Wailers to me. They sound like Bunny, Peter, and Bob. Last year I came back from a trip and heard their new harmonies and it frightened me, man. I was totally frightened."

The future of reggae may very well be a return to the music's roots. The cross-over crooning of such singers as Freddie McGregor and the fast-rising Beres Hammond, among others, recall the days when rock steady greats like Alton Ellis drew upon American rhythm and blues. Inside the dance halls, meanwhile, deejays like Admiral Baily, Brigadier Gerry, and now Pinchers have brought back the old sound-system scene with their rapid-fire patois rap-arguments. Only Third World and groups outside Jamaica, like Steel Pulse and Aswad, have sought a new direction—and that has

"There are changes in music—different generations and different times. That's the way it is."

been toward slickness.

With their first album, *Flames*, Foundation has established itself as the first significant new vocal group to come out of Jamaica since the late seventies. With their message songs and socially conscious lyrics, it is no accident that Jack Ruby likens them to the early Wailers. "We don't try for a certain kind of music," explains Keith Douglas, leaning against the cement wall of a plantation's burnt-out family house in the hills above Port Maria, where the trio rehearses. "It just comes. You use it the way it is. There are changes in music—different generations and different times. That's the way it is. The sound comes to you this way and you put it across this way. If it come to you as a Bob [Marley] type, then we play a Bob type. You cannot put a different type. You have to put what fit it."

—Robert Keating



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"Are you putting Elliot Sharp on your list? He should be on there too."

ROBERT PALMER

These Immortal Souls, Live Skull, the Leaving Trains, Luiz Gonzaga, Frank Morgan, Randy Weston

"The time for accordions has definitely come. . . ."

CHRIS CARROLL

The Neighborhoods, Negativland, Phantom Tollbooth, Victoria Williams, the Meat Puppets, Metallica, Timbuk 3, Living Colour

"Can I put Jerry Garcia on? Is that okay?"

GLENN O'BRIEN

John Zorn, Jon Hassell, Arto Lindsay, Big

Black, Dreamhouse, Jamaladeen Tacuma, Ronald Shannon Jackson, Ned Sublette, Peter Gordon, Die Zwei

"Jazz is coming back. . . ."

SCOTT COHEN

Slamming Watusis, Blue Watusis, Sex Kittens, Gaye Bikers on Acid, Patti Smith

"What about Brian Wilson? The new Brian Wilson. He's doing a solo record."

ALEXANDRIA

Megadeth, Glen Danzig, Death Angel, Black Flames, Jane's Addiction, Alien Sex Fiend, E-Z-O, Flotsam & Jetsam

"Do we have an update on the Led Zeppelin reunion, and does anyone know if Alien Sex Fiend have good hair?"

BOB GUCCIONE, JR.

Blue in Heaven "if they haven't already broken up," RAI music, Astor Piazzola, Soul Asylum, O.K. Savant, Chris Isaak, Patti Smith, Dead or Alive, Indigos, Peter Dinklage

Soul Asylum, Leland's pick for '88.

Smithereens, Dead or Alive, Lone Justice, 86 "if they haven't already broken up"

CELIA FARBER

Lolita Pop, Mr. Crystal Party, the Fugitives, Fibre, Tom Verlaine, Children of the Night, Smithereens, Paleface, O.K. Savant, Imperiet

BASIL BERRY

Dukes of Stratosphere, Shriekback, Penguin Cafe Orchestra, Public Image Ltd., Red Hot Chili Peppers, Big Black "they'll be back," Firehose

"God, am I hungry!"

BRIAN CULLMAN

Yousou N'dour, Dede St.-Prix, Arvo Pärt, Victoria Williams, E.S.G., Beres Hammond, Living Colour, Bug Opera, Gentlemen Farmers, 3 Mustaphas 3, Sussan Deihim & Richard Horowitz, Olu Dara

"No matter how simple a man might be, the obvious cannot go on astounding him forever." —Thomas Merton

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girls. We weren't looking for a Patti LaBelle or that type of singer. We were looking for a young girl singer with an innocent vocal quality, where kids can listen to her voice and say, 'I can sing like that,' or 'I can sing better than that.'"

SPIN: Would you have had the same success with any girl?

LOU GEORGE: CBS once told us that as far as "I Wonder If I Take You Home" was concerned, it coulda been Donna Donna or Brenda Brenda—the song was a hit, regardless. But as far as the success now, I don't know.

SPIN: Does she owe it all to you?

LOU GEORGE: I don't wanna sound promiscuous, but, I mean, she owes it to us, she owes it to herself, because she has talent also. But we started it, Full Force started it, plain and simple. We created the baby, and the growth is starting to happen, and we're there.

THEOGONY (BIRTH)

Full Force and Steve Salem signed Lisa Velez to a management and production deal, then struck a deal between Full Force Productions and Columbia Records. "After a while," says Lou George, "we signed her to the label itself, but it's a stipulation in there where only we can produce her, nobody else can do it but us."

With Full Force as writers and producers, playing the music and singing background vocals, they recorded "I Wonder If I Take You Home" and "Can You Feel the Beat?," the first two singles for Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam with Full Force.

SPIN: What did you think when they told you you would be Lisa Lisa?

LISA LISA: I thought it was fun. I thought people were gonna ask me did I stutter and shit. I guess they had the type of idea like, okay, "Roxanne Roxanne" [the U.T.F.O. song that was breaking at the time] worked, why not Lisa Lisa? I thought it was cute, because I knew it would cause controversy, talk.

SPIN: How do you get paid? Do the royalties go to you or to the production company?

LISA LISA: It goes to the company, and the company takes out whatever, and then it goes to me. They say I'm making a lot, but I don't think about the money. I'm not doing this for the money. I can always have money. I can work for my money. I was pulling in 600 to 700 a week when I was working at Benetton, so it doesn't mean shit to me. I'm just doing this 'cause I want to sing. I don't like when people talk about money, really. It's just a big pain in the ass. So I just put it away, invest it, or just give it to my mom and say, "Here, Mom, go pay the bills." I don't like handling it, 'cause it makes your hands dirty.

SPIN: Why did you bid [a million dollars] against Michael Jackson for the remains of the Elephant Man?

LISA LISA: 'Cause, everything he wants, he gets. And I felt, if he were to get the Elephant Man's bones—I think that's beautiful. The first time I saw the movie, I got so into it. God, it was sad, but then again, it was happy, because he found someone to be friends with him and to teach him things. I got so into it I ended up seeing it like 30 times. If there are Elephant Man's bones available, I think that not only Michael Jackson should be able to see them. What I wanted to do was donate them to a museum in New York. I'd have really bought them.

When U.T.F.O. released the single "Hanging Out" in the early winter of 1984, its B-side, about a girl who resisted the rappers' advances, rapidly became the most requested song on both of New York's urban radio stations. "Roxanne" became teen parlance for a stuck-up girl. A 14-year-old named Lolita Shanté Gooden changed her name to Roxanne Shanté and recorded "Roxanne's Revenge," and the flood of answer records was on.

"I called up B and said, 'This is a fucking phenomenon, we gotta do an answer record,'" Salem remembers. "So they started looking for girls. They found the first Roxanne at the Funhouse, outside. This girl wasn't a rapper. They just liked the way she looked. That's it, period. They had the track written, B wrote the words, and they just liked the way she looked. We went and cut [The Real Roxanne]."

"If there are Elephant Man's bones available, I think that not only Michael Jackson should be able to see them."

"She started doing shows, opening for U.T.F.O., and she was getting paid what she was supposed to get paid, but her mother didn't think she was getting paid enough. She thought her daughter should be treated like Diana Ross or somebody. We didn't want the headaches, so we just said, 'Fine, we can get another girl, it doesn't make any difference to us.' We were perfectly within our right to cut off the girl, which we did.

"The second girl we found was working in a restaurant. Again, we just liked the way she looked. We put her on tour with Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam. She had guaranteed work for X amount of dollars a night—it was fair, whatever it was. It got time for the tour, and she decided she didn't want to go. We couldn't get in touch with her."

"We had three or four Roxannes," says Lou George. "It wasn't as an artist or anything, it was mainly as an employee. It was like Menudo. Things didn't work out later on down the line, and we parted ways."

SPIN: Did you know Roxanne?

MIKE HUGHES: Yeah. She went through a lot of changes. Opportunity hit her. All the sudden she woke up and said, "I must be a star." That's the last thing you say to yourself. She made a lot of decisions on her own career. That's what you have management for, to make decisions on your career.

SPIN: Do you ever think that if you have a falling out with Full Force, they'll replace you like they did Roxanne?

MIKE HUGHES: Not this time. This time, if we ever have a falling out, everything's gonna change. There's no replacing us now. Whether they decided to work with Lisa alone, that would be up to them, as far as replacing me and Cult Jam.

SPIN: Did you think they might in the beginning?

MIKE HUGHES: I think I always thought it would just fall.

SPIN: Is it dangerous to trust someone that much?

MIKE HUGHES: Probably. I trust 'em like I trust my family. Sometimes your family screws up on you, too. But they've succeeded in every possible way

in the last four years.

On the strength of its singles and its deft combination of hip hop beats and Latin disco flavor, *Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam* went platinum. The followup LP, *Spanish Fly*, bore out the producers' original neo-Supremes strategy and yielded two singles, "Head to Toe" and "Lost in Emotion," that topped both the black and pop charts.

To get an idea of what Lisa Lisa means to the kids that buy her records, it is perhaps best here to consult the author's 11-year-old neighbor, Lisa Megna.

THE AUTHOR'S NEIGHBOR

SPIN: Do you think of Lisa Lisa as a role model?

LISA MEGNA: Yes, because she's very pretty and I like her clothes and I like her songs. I think of her as being a teenager, even though she is a grownup. I think of almost all singers as teenagers, because they're like, their songs are really neat, and because they sing really high-pitched. That's what I like about their songs. And Lisa Lisa is probably the most famous.

SPIN: Do you think of Madonna as a teenager?

LISA MEGNA: Not really, because Madonna isn't all that nice-looking as Lisa Lisa. Madonna doesn't dress all that nice, and when Madonna changed her hair and got married, everything changed about her.

SPIN: What did you think "I Wonder If I Take You Home" was about?

LISA MEGNA: I really didn't know what she was singing about because I was a little too young, but when my mother explained it to me, I understood and I really didn't like it too much. She told me that "I Wonder If I Take You Home" meant like that she wanted to take her boyfriend home, and they wanted to know about if she wanted to take him home. I guess in the end she said no. I don't know, I'm not positive. I was only like eight or nine years old, and I really didn't understand it. But now that I'm older I understand a whole lot of songs, and my favorite song from Lisa Lisa is, I'm not too sure if you know it, but it's "Lost in Emotion."

SPIN: Why that song?

LISA MEGNA: Because a lot of my friends like it, and because it's the newest and freshest song around. I just like it. I like the beat.

EPILOGUE

Back at Radio City Music Hall, Lisa breaks from her sermonette into the ballad "All Cried Out." From the wings, Lou and Paul Anthony George emerge and join her, center stage, in a musical dialogue. "I want you right here," Lou shouts, pointing to the poker hand, a royal flush, painted on the crotch of his black pants. "I want you right here," he repeats, pointing again. "I want you right here," and this time he grabs the royal flush and falls to his knees. The men in the audience shout their appreciation.

To Lisa's left, Paul Anthony, a white headband around his oiled Jheri curls, caresses the mounds under his low-cut white tank top and sings, in falsetto, "I need you baby, I need you so much." He wraps his arms around Lisa from behind and begins grinding his hips. The men in the audience begin barking.

Lisa breaks away. "Fellas," she says. "All this attention, really." She pauses a second, looking at them, as the audience goes quiet. Then, in her strongest voice of the night, she sings, "But what about me? What about my needs? What about meeeeeee?" The George brothers bow and leave the stage. "What about me?," she sings, one last time. The audience explodes. ☼

cult to move once you have such a huge machine going.

SPIN: And imagine the consequences of admitting that it was the wrong virus, or the wrong cause, after all these years. Everything would go right back to zero.

DUESBERG: Not only back to zero, we would also be at a considerable deficit of time and money. That is a very real contributing factor—money.

Scientists researching AIDS are much less inclined to ask scrutinizing questions about the etiology [cause] of AIDS when they have invested huge sums of money in companies that make money on the hypothesis that HIV is the AIDS virus. William Haseltine and Max Essex, for example, who are two of the top five AIDS researchers in the country, have millions in stocks in a company they founded that has developed and will sell AIDS kits that test for HIV. How could they be objective? Gallo stands to make a lot of money from patent rights on the virus. His entire reputation depends on this virus. If HIV is not the cause of AIDS, there's nothing left for Gallo. If it's not a retrovirus, Gallo would become irrelevant.

The stakes are too high now. Ten years ago, when they were lower, theories could be exchanged and examined more rationally. This cannot be done now. Gallo's lab works so closely with the news media. Every progress report from their laboratories is discussed by Dan Rather and Barbara Walters, *Newsweek*, and *Time* magazine. Every little observation is in all newspapers. To say that now, maybe, the antibody wasn't worth committing suicide for or burning houses for, would be very embarrassing.

SPIN: Obviously, you must consider the mass testing for HIV antibodies to be an absolute farce.

DUESBERG: Oh yes, of course. The whole thing is a hoax. A group of reporters from England came here to do a documentary about dissenting AIDS theories, and they were told that Gallo would not discuss HIV.

SPIN: Did you really tell Gallo that you wouldn't mind being injected with HIV? Has anyone tried to take you up on that?

DUESBERG: Oh yes, we joke about it, and I say, "Give it to me. As long as it's not from Gallo's lab, I'll take it."

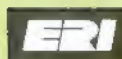
Despite SPIN's repeated attempts to reach Gallo, he was unavailable to respond to comments by Duesberg and others concerning his research and personal ambitions. A research associate in his office, who asked not to be named, said that Duesberg's statements regarding Gallo's royalties are unwarranted, and that claims that Dr. Gallo was avoiding Duesberg are "ridiculous."

Researchers like William Haseltine and Max Essex are angered by Duesberg's insinuation that their objectivity might be swayed by their financial enterprise. "I deeply resent the implication that my business investments have affected my work," says Haseltine, although he confirms his and Essex's business arrangement with Cambridge Bio-Science, a company that sells HIV testing kits.

"Clearly HIV causes AIDS," Gallo has said. "Anyone who says it doesn't, doesn't know the facts."

The question is, whose facts? And why are certain facts integrated and others ignored?

A recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showed that of all AIDS cases registered in New York and San Francisco after 1985, 93 percent were never confirmed to be HIV positive.

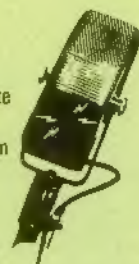


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_____	_____	126 CHASE & SANBORN HOUR w/MAE WEST on NBC - 12 Dec 1937: show that got Mae banned from radio.
_____	_____	072 GROUCHO MARX w/brother Chico, Tallulah Bankhead & Baby Snooks; comedy routines 1938-50.
_____	_____	057 JACKIE GLEASON: complete broadcast - 24 Sept 1944; and, comedy routines from 1940's & 50's
_____	_____	034 EDGAR BERGEN SHOW w/CHARLIE MCCARTHY & guest MARILYN MONROE on CBS - 1952; plus, 3 May 1942.
_____	_____	098 ADVENTURES OF OZZIE & HARRIET w/David & Ricky - 5 Oct 1951; and Phil Harris/Alice Faye Show.
_____	_____	084 ARTHUR GODFREY TALENT SCOUTS w/Lenny Bruce, Wally Cox, and Donald Duck: skits 1946-50
_____	_____	124 INTERPLANETARY ADVENTURES OF FLASH GORDON: four complete programs during 1935.
_____	_____	091 THE MALTESE FALCON w/HUMPHREY BOGART & PETER LORRE: two complete programs - 1943 & 1946.
_____	_____	059 DRAGNET w/JACK WEBB: two complete programs - 10 Sept 1949 and Dec 7 1950.
_____	_____	048 GENE AUTRY/Melody Ranch Adventure - 1953; and, Hopalong Cassidy - 11 Oct 1950.
_____	_____	100 COMMAND PERFORMANCE VJ DAY - 15 Aug 1945 w/ FRANK SINATRA, BING CROSBY, DINAH SHORE, CARMEN MIRANDA, ORSON WELLES, JIMMY DURANTE, etc.
_____	_____	095 TIMEX ALL-STAR JAZZ SHOW - 30 Apr 1958 w/LOUIS ARMSTRONG, LIONEL HAMPTON, GENE KRUPA, etc.



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Am I talking to you?
Yeah, I'm talking to you.

THE TYPICAL

The typical New Yorker has a regular coffee and a bagel with schmear for breakfast and drinks a quart of vodka before retiring.

The typical New Yorker has three locks on the front door.

The typical New Yorker knows how to get where he's going better than the typical New York cab driver.

The typical New Yorker has a relative who was on the "David Susskind Show."

The typical New Yorker considers New York to be independent from the United States, like Hong Kong is independent from China.

The typical New Yorker walks around bodies on the sidewalk.

The typical New Yorker has a lot of friends who don't know how to drive, but considers himself a typical New York driver, the best in the world.

The typical New Yorker has never tried crack but knows where it can be had.

The typical New Yorker has killed and will kill again.

The typical New Yorker knows three people with loft beds.

The typical New Yorker knows over one hundred Yiddish words.

The typical New Yorker is willing to walk nearly as far as the typical Australian aborigine.

The typical New Yorker tips his hat when passing a church and opens doors for persons called "Ms."

The typical New Yorker sees an average of a rat a day and one and a half "Wheel of Fortunes" a week.

The typical New Yorker calls it "a shot and a beer," not "a boilermaker."

The typical New Yorker doesn't mind being called "nigger," "whitey" or "Mary" by his friends, but bristles at hearing "pal" from strangers.

The typical New Yorker used to be addicted to heroin but hasn't shot up in ten years.

The typical New Yorker feels right at home in Tokyo.

The typical New Yorker says "iMira, mira!" all the time.

The typical New Yorker can prepare a decent pasta dinner in 25 minutes.

The typical New Yorker has a piece of the true cross.

The typical New Yorker gives up a seat on the bus to a pregnant woman once a year.

The typical New Yorker has saved someone who was pushed in front of an oncoming subway train but has heard of cases where a rape victim cries for help unheeded by an entire



Michael Grossklau

NEW YORKER

neighborhood for over an hour.

The typical New Yorker knows the difference between calamari and scungilli.

The typical New Yorker won't take no for an answer.

The typical New Yorker likes California but would never live there.

The typical New Yorker doesn't worry about terrorism except in Central Park at night.

The typical New Yorker always carries a beer can in a brown paper bag when drinking on the street.

The typical New Yorker is courteous to out-of-towners and can explain how to get anywhere in the city. Often the typical New Yorker will cancel his or her plans for the day to show strange tourists the town.

The typical New Yorker can do the twist, the frug, the fish, the swim, the monkey, the jerk, the mashed potato, the pony, the turkey trot, the stroll, the hustle, the fly, the eagle rock, the huckle buck, the funky robot, and the locomotion.

The typical New Yorker has some good advice for the Pope, the President, the Governor, the Mayor, and the rest of them.

The typical New Yorker torches his car when it's worn out.

The typical New Yorker is convinced the President is lying about that being his natural hair color.

The typical New York cab driver is allergic to tobacco smoke and if he inhales any he will lose control of the vehicle.

The typical New Yorker is friends with the cop on the beat and calls him by his first name, which is Pat.

The typical New Yorker calls a hot dog a frankfurter.

The typical New Yorker knows a guy who used to be a top copywriter on Madison Avenue who is now a bum on the Bowery, or a top trader on Wall Street who is now in jail.

The typical New Yorker is skeptical about astrology but can usually guess your sign within three tries.

The typical New Yorker is happy most of the time.

The typical New Yorker smokes three or four cigarettes a day, usually in elevators.

The typical New Yorker's favorite phrases are: "Let's go Mets!," "Have a nice day," and "The check is in the mail."

The typical New Yorker lives in Brooklyn.

The typical New Yorker will one day make a great Floridian.

Niceties by Glenn O'Brien

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*After all,
if smoking
isn't a pleasure,
why bother?*



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